YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

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THE LODGER

YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

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THE EIGHTH NIGHT: FACING MIRRORS (PART TWO)

I'M AN OPERATOR AT A TELEGRAM AND TELEPHONE OFFICE. I RECEIVED A CALL FROM YOSHINORI ONE DAY.

※OPERATOR A PERSON WHO CONNECTED PHONE CALLS FROM THE CALLER TO THE RECEIVING PARTY.

HE PROJECTED HIS FANTASY GIRL ONTO ME, AND THEN FELL IN LOVE WITH HER.

BUT INSTEAD OF ASKING FOR A CONNECTION, HE STARTED TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF. HE KEPT CALLING AFTER THAT.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE MEANT, BUT...

HE SAID HE WANTED TO MEET ME, "EVEN IF ONLY IN A DREAM ..."

AND LAST NIGHT HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE AND THEN HUNG UP THE PHONE.

BUT YOU HAD TO PRETEND TO BE THE ARISTOCRATIC EIKO THAT YOSHINORI ADMIRED...

YOU COULDN'T REVEAL YOUR TRUE SELF.

...AND I WAS FASCINATED BY HIS UPPER-CLASS LIFESTYLE, WHICH WAS SO DIFFERENT FROM MINE.

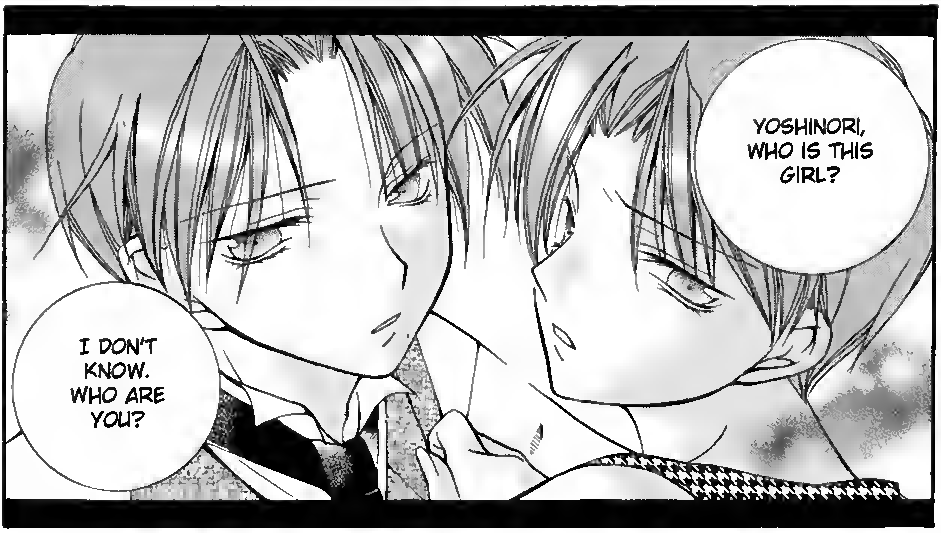
THEY WERE NEVER MORE THAN PHONE CONVERSATIONS, BUT I ENJOYED THEM. HIS WORLD SEEMED SO TANTALIZING.

I'M SURE YOU HAVE A VAGUE IDEA ALREADY.
I THOUGHT IF I CAME HERE, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SEE HIM.
HE'S BESOTTED WITH HIMSELF. THE IMAGE THAT HE PROJECTED ONTO YOU WAS HIS OWN.
SO YOU ALSO PINNED YOUR HOPES ON A FANTASY?
THE PERSON HE WANTED TO MEET WASN'T YOU, BUT ANOTHER YOSHINORI.
HEH/ HEH
WELL, THIS IS YOSHINORI.
He's sleeping.
IN LAST NIGHT'S DREAM, HE ACHIEVED THAT.
THIS IS HIM...

NO. I AM ONLY INTERESTED IN NIGHTMARES.
OH! CAN YOU TAKE ME INTO YOSHINORI'S DREAM?
IT WAS THIS BAKU, HIRUKO, WHO LET THE TWO YOSHINORIS MEET.
?
I SHARED ALL THOSE CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM.
I'M THE REAL EIKO!
PLEASE! I WANT HIM TO NOTICE ME.
...
BUT I CAN'T LOSE TO ANYONE...
SMIRK
I KNOW!
YOUR RIVAL IS PRETTY INVINCIBLE.

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
PUT YOUR HAND ON HIS SHOULDER.
FOOSH!

HIRUKO?
...WHAT DO YOU WANT?
THIS GIRL WAS LOOKING FOR YOU.


YOSHINORI, WHO IS THIS GIRL?
I DON'T KNOW. WHO ARE YOU?

I'M EIKO HOJO!
I'M THE REAL EIKO!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
EIKO IS THIS BEAUTIFUL WOMAN HERE.
NO! SHE'S JUST A PRODUCT OF YOUR NARCISSISM!
SHE DOESN'T REALLY EXIST!
!
...
YOSHINORI IS IN LOVE WITH ME, SO THAT MAKES ME THE REAL EIKO.
NO! I'M THE REAL ONE!
SHUT UP! JUST LEAVE US!
Oh dear...
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SHOULD GO!
IRRITATING GIRL!
TAP TAP
CRACK

AAAAH!
SHATTER!
YOSHI-NORI!

...
SHRRR
UGH!
YOU...
...I'M GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.
!
CLINK
!

HEH... HEH HEH
...I SEE... THAT'S ME...?
NO... I KNOW I'D HAVE DONE THE SAME...
YOU'RE... DESPICABLE.
I WAS SO IN LOVE WITH MY OWN APPEARANCE AND SOCIAL STATUS THAT I NEVER EVEN NOTICED YOU...
YES... I'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE...
YOSHI-NORI..!
SWW
EIKO, YOU'RE MY DREAM GIRL.

TIME TO WAKE UP.
LOOK! THE MIRROR THAT REFLECTED MY VANITY IS GONE.
HEE HEE
FOOSH
YOU'RE MY ONLY LOVE NOW.

A FEW WEEKS LATER
A LETTER CAME FROM EIKO.
HOW ARE THEY DOING?
WHEN THE NIGHTMARE SHOWED YOSHINORI HIS NARCISSISM, HE REJECTED IT.
HIS DOUBLE HELPED HIM SEE THE FLAWS IN HIS OWN CHARACTER.
SO, WHAT DOES IT SAY?
"THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.
"WE'VE BEEN VERY HAPPY TOGETHER, AND WE'RE NOW MARRIED.
"HE TAKES SUCH GOOD CARE OF ME."
"IT'S HARD SOMETIMES, BUT WE'RE TRYING OUR BEST."
HEE HEE
IT MUST BE DIFFICULT SUDDENLY JOINING A NOBLE FAMILY.
DING
WELCO...

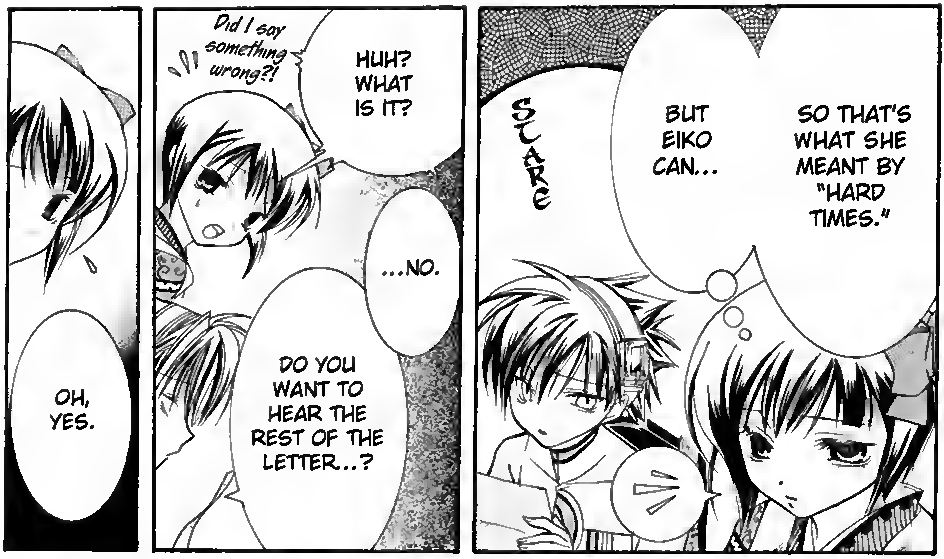
I'M YOSHINORI NANJO...
...IT'S BEEN A WHILE...
DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
HEH... I DECIDED TO LOVE ONLY EIKO.
?
...YOUR FACE?
IT WAS...
WHO ARE YOU?!
AND THERE WAS SOME-ONE IN THEM.
SOME-HOW THE MIRRORS HAD COME BACK.
AND THEN, I STARTED TO HAVE A NEW NIGHTMARE.

THE ONE WHO HATES YOU.
I LURK IN THE BOTTOM OF YOUR HEART...
IF YOU TRULY LOVE EIKO, THEN, LIKE THE SHATTERED MIRROR IN YOUR DREAM...
SHOULDN'T THE REAL YOU BE DESTROYED TOO?
THE MIRROR THAT SYMBOLIZED YOUR NARCISSISM MAY BE BROKEN, BUT DREAMS ARE NOT REALITY.
EVERYTHING!
SHNK
YOUR STATUS. YOUR APPEARANCE.
YOUR PERSONALITY.
SHNK
SHNK

YOU DECIDED TO LOVE ONLY EIKO, DIDN'T YOU?
IT WAS THE MANIFESTATION OF MY SELF-LOATHING.
BY DENYING MY NARCISSISM I AWOKE IT.
EIKO...
YES. I LOVE ONLY...
THEN I'LL DESTROY YOU!
THE FACE YOU USED TO LOVE SO MUCH!
NGH...
UGH...

AAAAAAA-
AAAAARR-
RGGGHHH!
AND I DID THIS TO MYSELF...
SO I BECAME TORN UP INSIDE, LIKE HIM.
I LOST MY NOBLE STATUS.
MY FAMILY THOUGHT I WAS MENTALLY UNSTABLE AND CUT ME OFF.
BUT I REGRET NOTHING.
I CAN LOVE EIKO FREELY NOW.
YES... THINGS ARE GOOD NOW.
RIGHT? THIS IS GOOD...?

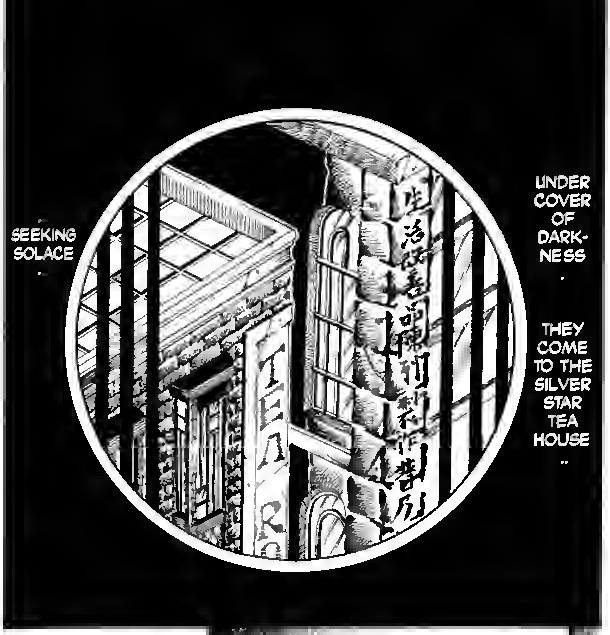
IT'S OKAY. AT HOME...
...THERE'S A FAITHFUL, SWEET GIRL WAITING FOR YOU.
...THANK YOU.
THAT'S WHAT I NEEDED TO HEAR...
DING


OH, YES.
Did I say something wrong?!
HUH? WHAT IS IT?
...NO.
DO YOU WANT TO HEAR THE REST OF THE LETTER...?
STARE
BUT EIKO CAN...
SO THAT'S WHAT SHE MEANT BY "HARD TIMES."

"THAT'S HOW I CAME TO LOVE HIM. NOW THAT HE'S LOST HIS STATUS...
"BUT WHAT ATTRACTED ME TO YOSHINORI DURING OUR PHONE CONVERSATIONS WAS HIS SOCIAL STATUS.
"WE'RE GETTING BY.

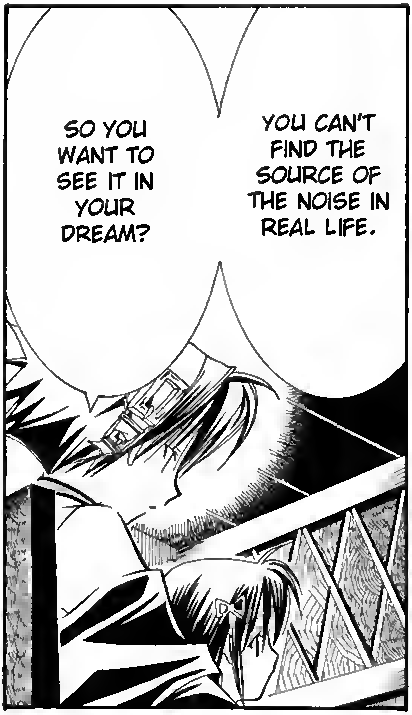
"...I DON'T HAVE ANY FEELINGS FOR HIM..."

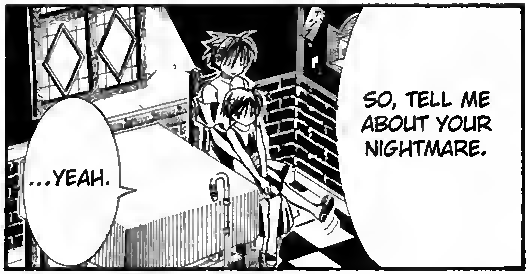
THE NINTH NIGHT: SOUND



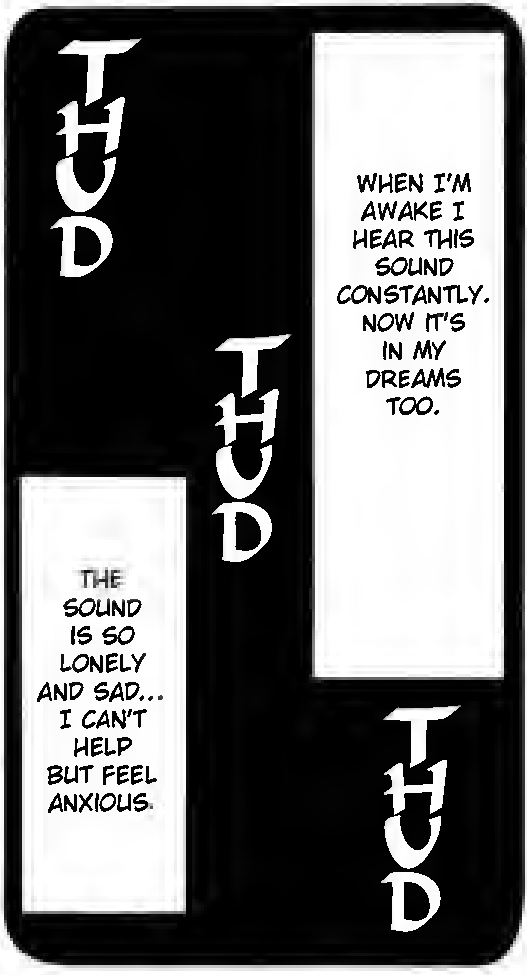
ARE YOU HIRUKO THE BAKU?
WHEN DID SHE...?
I AM. WHO ARE YOU?
SHIZUKA.
OH.
LOOK...
I NEED YOU TO LOOK INSIDE MY NIGHTMARE.
YOU...
YOUR EYES, ARE YOU...
I SEE.
SO YOUNG
YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL SORRY FOR ME.
I MAY BE BLIND, BUT I DON'T SUFFER.
I JUST ...

...IMAGINE WHAT I CANNOT SEE.
IMAGINE...
C'MON, LET'S GO IN THE BACK.
YES.
HUH?
THIS GIRL...
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
NO.
BUT MIZUKI IS SLEEPING, SO I CAN'T GET YOU ANYTHING.
YOU PROBABLY DON'T DRINK COFFEE ANYWAYS.
?
DON'T TREAT ME LIKE A LITTLE KID!
HA HA, I DON'T DRINK IT EITHER.
ZZZ


SO YOU WANT TO SEE IT IN YOUR DREAM?
YOU CAN'T FIND THE SOURCE OF THE NOISE IN REAL LIFE.


...YEAH.
SO, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR NIGHTMARE.

IT'S A DREAM ABOUT A NOISE.


THUD
THUD
THUD
WHEN I'M AWAKE I HEAR THIS SOUND CONSTANTLY. NOW IT'S IN MY DREAMS TOO.
THE SOUND IS SO LONELY AND SAD... I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL ANXIOUS.

I THINK THE ONLY WAY I CAN STOP WORRYING ABOUT IT IS IF I KNOW WHAT IT IS.

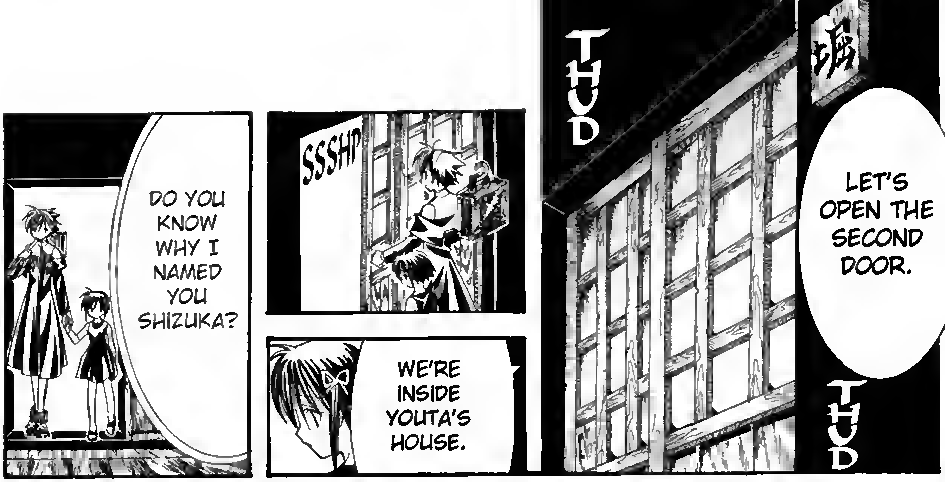
CLICK

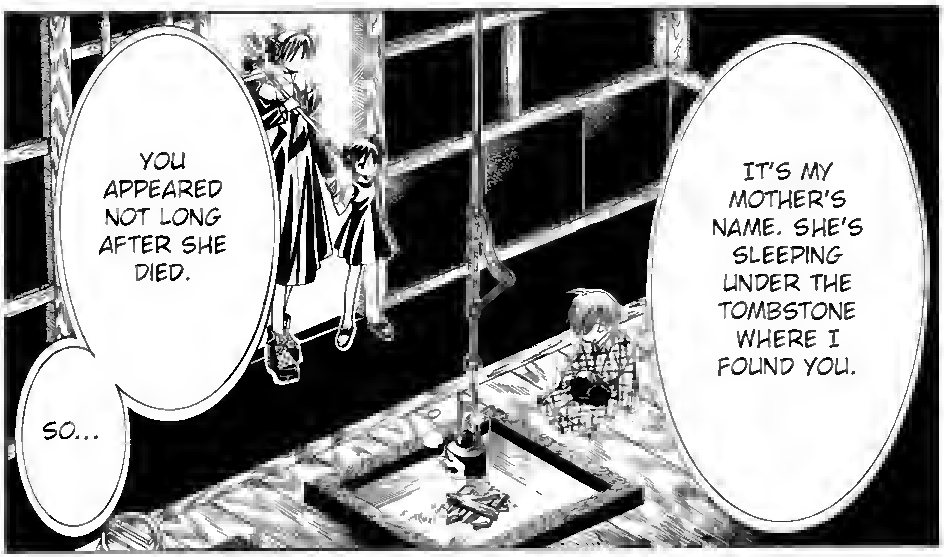
THEN I WILL BE YOUR EYES.
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
SWOSH!

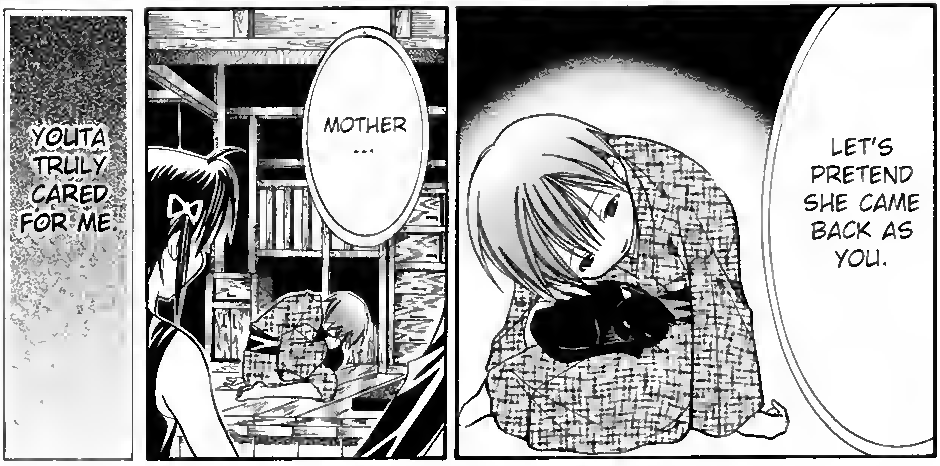
THUD
...
THUD
THAT'S THE SOUND! THIS IS MY DREAM!
THUD
THUD
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE NOISE IS COMING FROM BEHIND ONE OF THEM.
SHIZUKA, THERE ARE FOUR DOORS.
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD

LET'S START WITH THE ONE ON THE END.
EEEEAK
THUD
THUD
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
CLACK
IT'S A LANDSCAPE.
THERE IS A SINGLE TOMBSTONE BY A RIVER, AND IT'S DRIZZLING.
I SEE ...
A KITTEN.
...A KITTEN THERE.
THAT VOICE.
POOR THING... ARE YOU BLIND?

SHIZUKA.
THE SAME NAME AS ME.
HIS VOICE IS FAMILIAR.
YOU'RE ...
A BOY IS APPROACHING.
DO YOU WANT TO COME TO MY HOUSE?
I'LL GIVE YOU A NAME.
... SHIZUKA.
I REMEMBER THIS RAINY DAY...
I'M YOUTA, PLEASED TO MEET YOU!
"...IMAGINE WHAT YOU CANNOT SEE."
HUH?! WHAT DOES IT MEAN? BUT I...
BUT YOU...
OH, SO YOU'RE A CAT.


DO YOU KNOW WHY I NAMED YOU SHIZUKA?
SSSHP
WE'RE INSIDE YOUTA'S HOUSE.
THUD
LET'S OPEN THE SECOND DOOR.
THUD

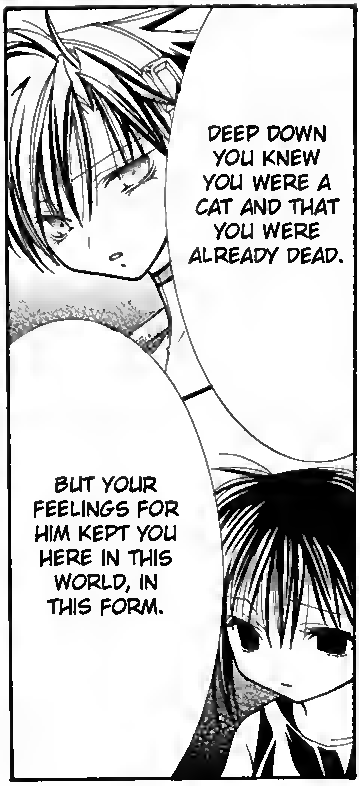

YOU APPEARED NOT LONG AFTER SHE DIED.
SO...
IT'S MY MOTHER'S NAME. SHE'S SLEEPING UNDER THE TOMBSTONE WHERE I FOUND YOU.


YOUTA TRULY CARED FOR ME.
MOTHER ...
LET'S PRETEND SHE CAME BACK AS YOU.

SOMETHING WARM FELL ON MY COLD BODY...
SHIZUKA.
YOU DIED...
SSSHP
THUD
THUD
THIS IS THE THIRD DOOR.
THUD
THUD
I WANT TO BE WITH YOU...
I WANT TO BE WITH YOU FOREVER...
SHIZUKA.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

AND THAT'S HOW YOU'RE USING YOUR IMAGINATION.
YOU'RE A SOUL THAT HAS LOST ITS BODY.

I'M SO LONELY ...
MOTHER ...

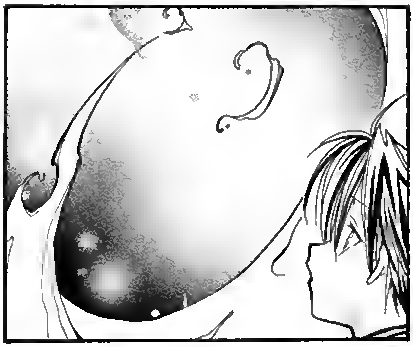

DEEP DOWN YOU KNEW YOU WERE A CAT AND THAT YOU WERE ALREADY DEAD.
BUT YOUR FEELINGS FOR HIM KEPT YOU HERE IN THIS WORLD, IN THIS FORM.

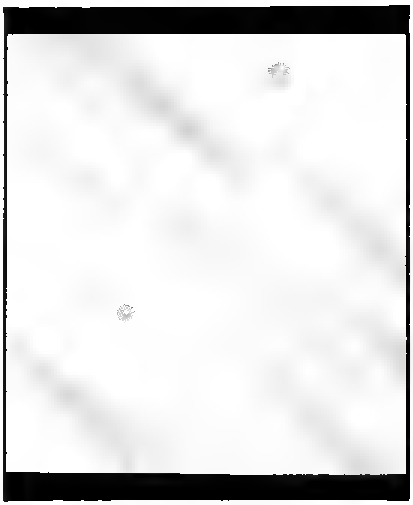
IMAGI-NATION...
YOU TOOK HUMAN FORM, THE SAME SHAPE AS YOUR BELOVED YOUTA.

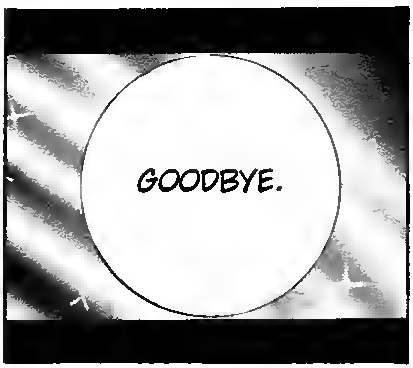
THUD
SURELY YOU KNOW WHAT THIS NOISE IS BY NOW.
THUD
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE NOISE IS COMING FROM HERE.
THUD
THE FINAL DOOR.
THUD
SSSHP
YOUTA SAID HE WANTED TO BE WITH ME FOREVER.
I'LL NEVER BE AT PEACE AS LONG AS THE NOISE CONTINUES.

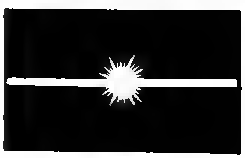
THUD
YOUTA IS HAMMERING IN A NAIL.
THE BOX IS ALREADY SPLIT...
IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I DIED!
BUT THE SOUND NEVER STOPS BECAUSE YOUTA KEEPS HAMMERING.
THUD
HE CAN'T LET ME— NO, HIS MOTHER— GO!
HE'S BEEN HAMMERING THE BOX EVER SINCE...!

SHH
ALSO...
THANK HIM FOR EVERY-THING...
HIRUKO, PLEASE! GO AND TELL YOUTA!
TELL HIM TO STOP AND LET ME REST!
IF I PROMISE, WILL YOU BE ABLE TO REST?
THE TRUTH IS... I WANTED TO KNOW IF YOUTA STILL MISSES ME. ...AND TO KEEP LISTENING TO THIS NOISE FOREVER.
BUT...






GOODBYE.

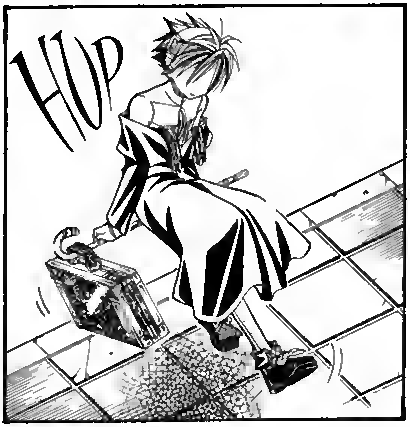


...THIS IS
GOODBYE...

CLATTER
★銀星館
CLATTER
I SUPPOSE GHOSTS DON'T DRINK COFFEE EITHER.
To think one would come while I was asleep ...
YOU KNEW SHE WAS A GHOST, DIDN'T YOU?
WHEN I LIFTED HER UP, SHE FELT STRANGE.
CAN GHOSTS HAVE BAD DREAMS TOO?
SWOOSH
TING
I KNEW IT...
SHE THOUGHT SHE WAS ALIVE AND HAVING A NIGHTMARE, AND YOU WENT ALONG WITH IT.
HIRUKO?

!!
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHERE HE LIVES?

ARE YOU GOING TO STOP YOUTA?
DING
BYOOO


HUP

IT'S OK. I'LL FOLLOW THE TRACE SHIZUKA LEFT WHEN SHE CAME HERE.

I SEE ...
AND ON AN EMPTY STOMACH TOO. HOW GOOD OF YOU.

The sun burns.
IT'S... FAR...
AH
AH
A TOMB-STONE BY THE RIVER.
THIS MUST BE THE PLACE.
IT'S QUIET...
NO ONE LIVES THERE ANYMORE.
HUSH
KNOCK
KNOCK

YOUTA LEFT HERE WITH HIS FATHER.
IT'S BEEN EMPTY FOR A WHILE NOW.
HUH?
SSSHP
BUT THERE'S A BOY CALLED YOUTA.
YOUTA?
THAT WAS SEVERAL YEARS AGO.
SEVERAL YEARS AGO...?

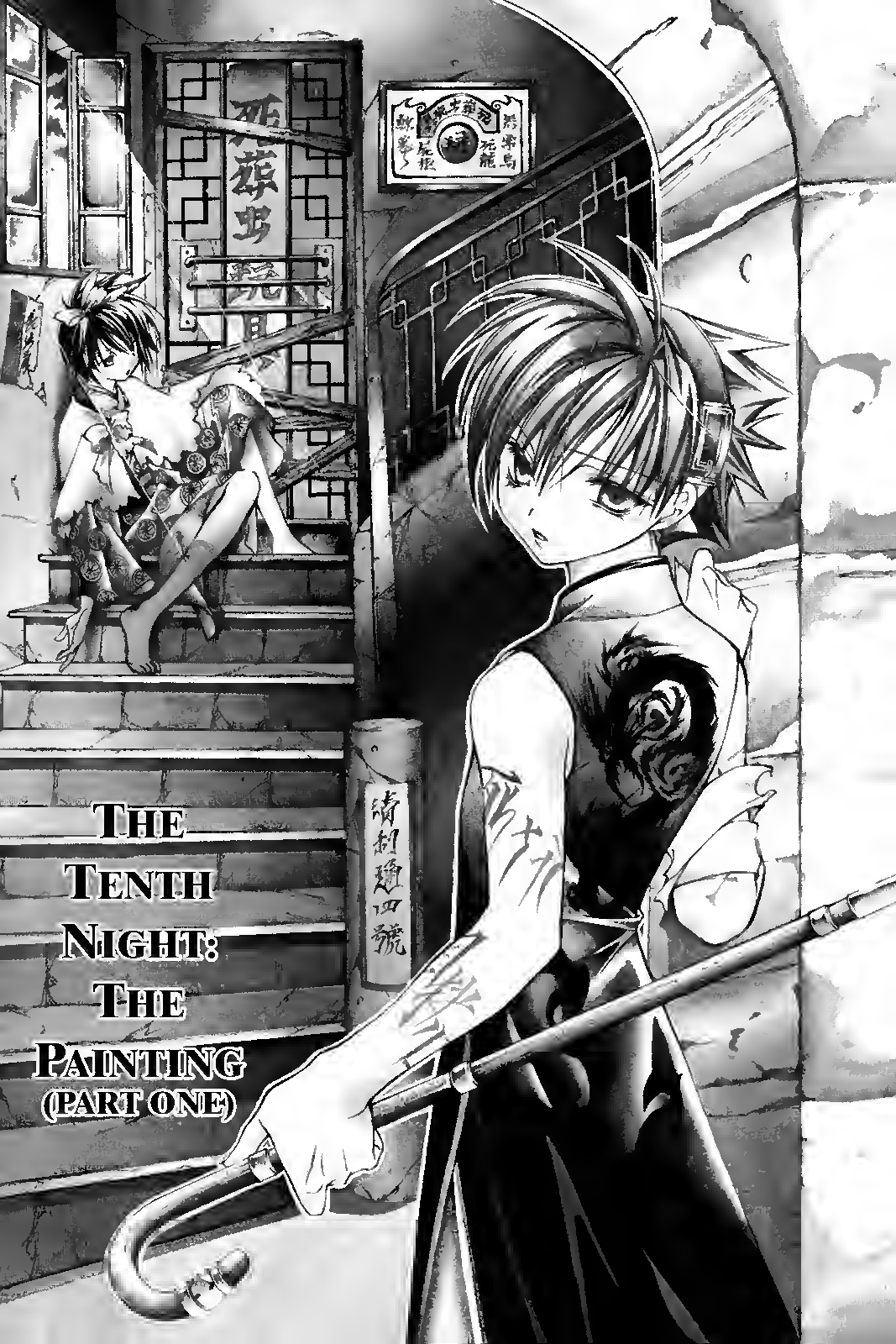
I DON'T GET IT...
TRUDGE TRUDGE
THAT NOISE!
SHUFFLE
TUD
TUD...
IF HE'S NOT HERE TO MAKE THE NOISE, THEN HOW?
TUD
TUD
TUD

!!
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THIS IS...
SHIZUKA'S GRAVE...
THERE'S AN INSCRIPTION.
WHY WOULD THE HAMMERING BE COMING FROM OVER THERE?
IT'S COMING FROM IN THERE.

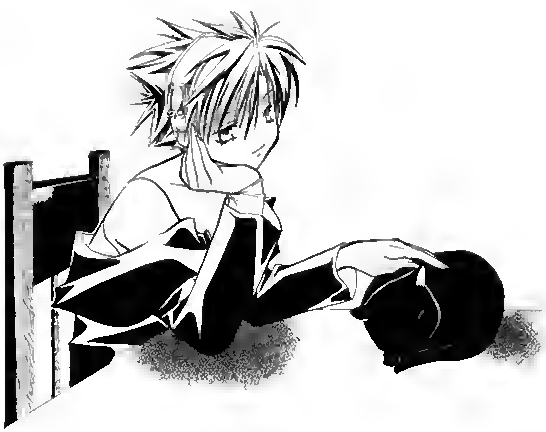
"NO MATTER HOW FAR APART WE ARE, HEAR THIS SOUND AND THINK OF ME. YOUTA."
"MY HEART WILL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU.
!
THUD
SSSHP
THUD
SHUFFLE
SHIZUKA ...
YOU REALLY WERE...
...IMAGINING WHAT YOU COULDN'T SEE...

HIDA
HIDA

THUD
FSSHH
THUD...
THUD...
THUD...



THE TENTH NIGHT: THE PAINTING (PART ONE)



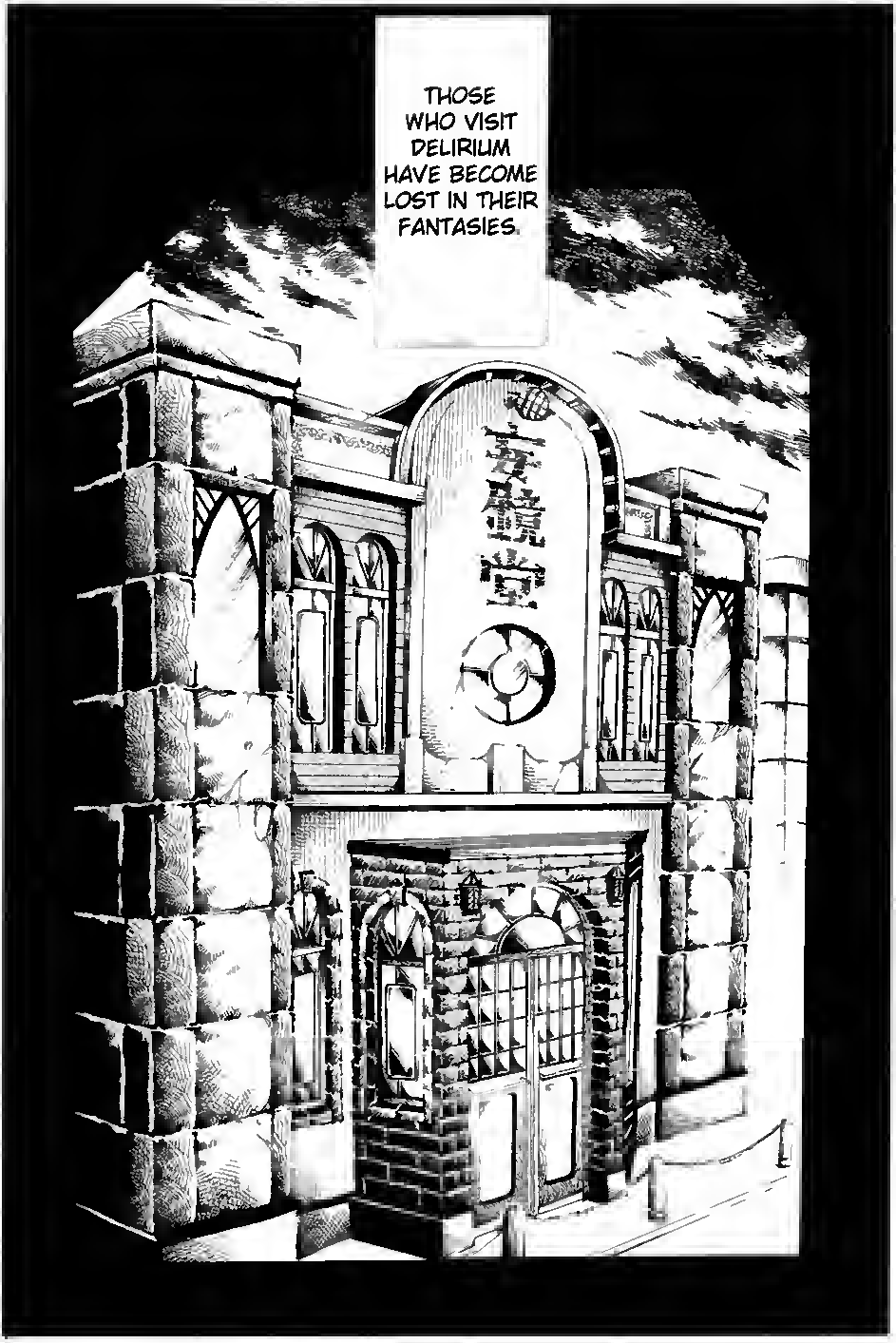
DING
YOU'RE BACK!
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
A CUSTOMER CAME WHILE YOU WERE AT YOUTA'S.
Last night.
WHAT KIND?
A GIRL CALLED RUMI HAKARIYA.
SHE WAS CARRYING AN OIL PAINTING. SHE SAID SHE WAS HAVING NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT.

IT'S A SELF-PORTRAIT BY HER LOVER, AKUO NIIMI.
HE WAS SENT TO WAR A FEW YEARS AGO. HE NEVER CAME BACK...
AKUO HAD AN EXTRAORDINARY PASSION FOR ART.
SHE LOVED HIM FOR THAT.
HE LEFT THE PAINTING UNFINISHED. HE INTENDED TO PAINT RUMI IN WHEN HE RETURNED, AS PROOF OF THEIR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER.
FEARING AKUO'S DEATH, RUMI FELL INTO DEPRESSION...

AT SOME POINT...
...SHE STARTED DREAMING THAT AKUO WAS CALLING HER TO JOIN HIM FROM INSIDE THE PAINTING.
JUST LIKE IN MY NIGHTMARE ...
I'M SURE HIS SPIRIT REMAINS IN THE PAINTING...
IF HE'S DEAD...
CLICK
AND SHE BEGAN TO ACT VERY STRANGELY ...

I WANT TO BE IN THE PAINTING TOO!
CLATTER
MY SOUL CAN LIVE ALONGSIDE AKUO'S...!
TOGETHER...
RUMI'S EYES ...
WERE COMPLETELY VACANT
AS IF SHE WAS CONSUMED BY HER FANTASY...
I...
HEE HEE
DING
I'M GOING TO THE DELIRIUM.

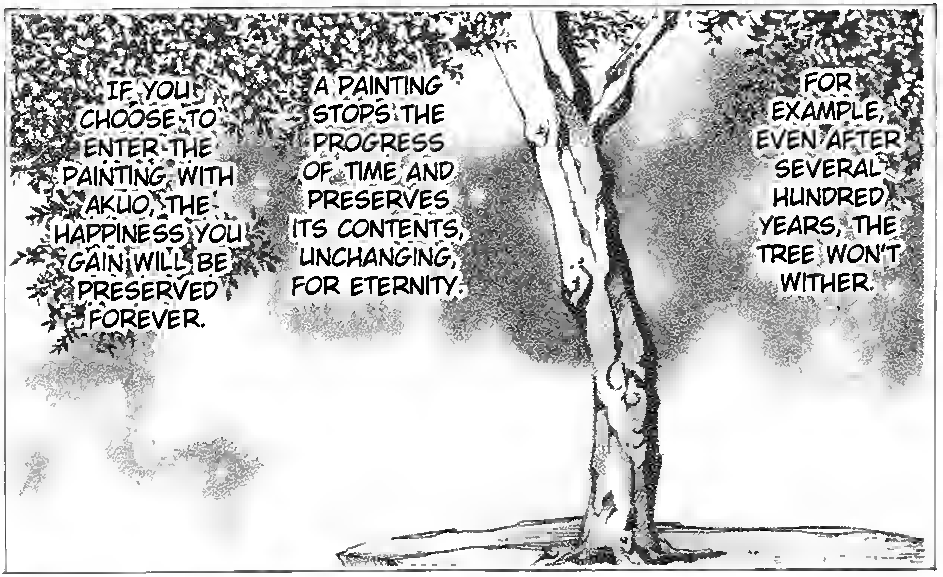
HOW WOULD A SPIRIT LIVE IN A PAINTING...
AND...
WHAT IS THE "DELIRIUM"?
IS THAT WHERE SHE WENT?
HEH HEH... INTERESTING.
I GUESS I'M DUE FOR A VISIT. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
WHAT? YOU KNOW IT? WHAT KIND OF PLACE IS IT?
HMM... THE DELIRIUM ...
IT'S A STRANGE BUILDING THAT EXISTS IN THE CITY.
STRANGE ...?
YES. PEOPLE COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE FOR HELP WITH THEIR BAD DREAMS. WHEREAS...

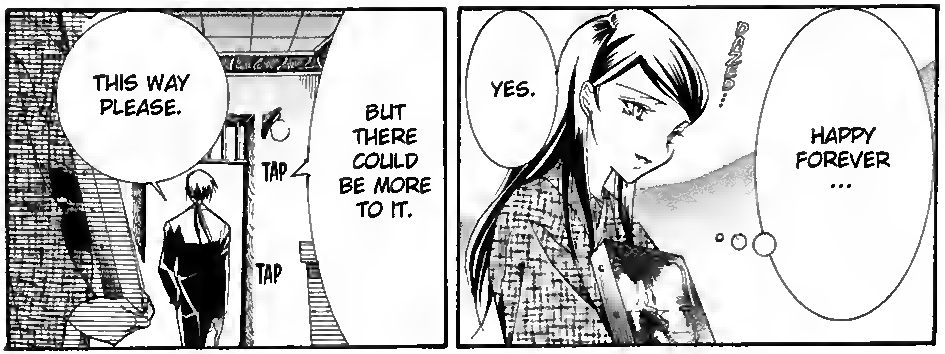

THOSE WHO VISIT DELIRIUM HAVE BECOME LOST IN THEIR FANTASIES.

THE OWNER IS NAMED KAIRI...
HELLO.
UMM...
THOUGH MOST OF THEM DON'T REALIZE IT.
LIKE RUMI.
SQUEAK
EXCUSE ME.
TEE HEE
MY NAME IS RUMI HAKARIYA...
TEE HEE
DELIRIUM CAN MAKE A VISITOR'S WISHES COME TRUE. WHETHER IT'S A BLESSING OR NOT DEPENDS ON THE PERSON.
A CUSTOMER?
TEE HEE
HE'S AN ECCENTRIC, IN LOVE WITH FANTASY.
Umm...
I DON'T DISLIKE HIM.

WELCOME!
WAKE UP, KAIRI, BACK TO REALITY!
Tee hee, the sky is all black and white...
Sorry!
HE'S ALWAYS DAYDREAMING.
...AND YOU ARE?
I'M SHIMA! I HELP KAIRI OUT!
I'VE HEARD THAT IF YOU VISIT HERE, YOUR WISH WILL COME TRUE.
WISH?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
SHE MEANS FANTASY...
I WANT ...
...TO JOIN AKUO'S SOUL IN THIS PAINTING.
Huh?
BUT IF YOU ENTER THE PAINTING YOU'LL STOP THE FLOW OF TIME FOR YOURSELF.

SMILE
KAIRI...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "STOP TIME..."?
WHOA!
When did you come back?!

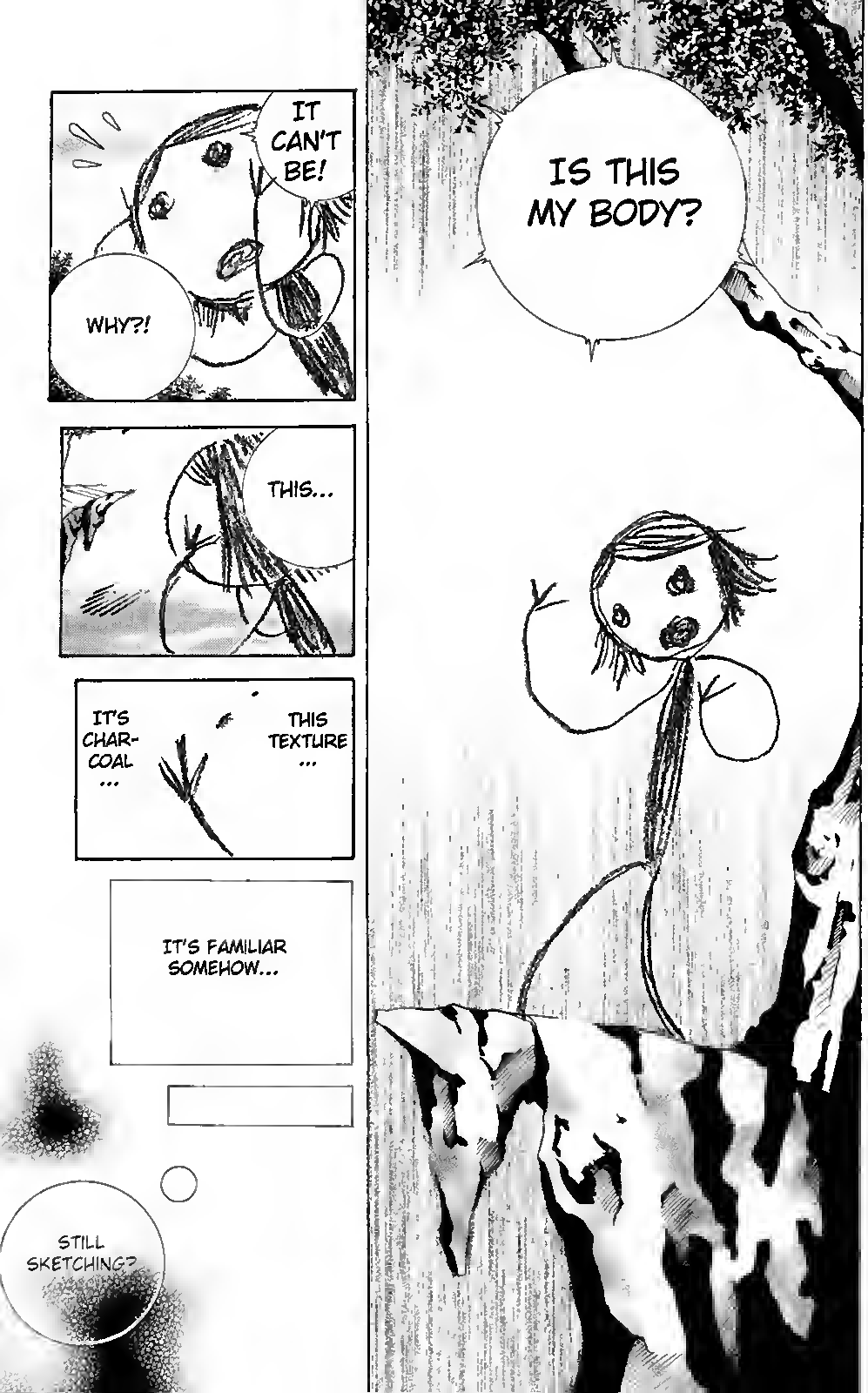

IF YOU CHOOSE TO ENTER THE PAINTING WITH AKUO, THE HAPPINESS YOU GAIN WILL BE PRESERVED FOREVER.
A PAINTING STOPS THE PROGRESS OF TIME AND PRESERVES ITS CONTENTS, UNCHANGING, FOR ETERNITY.
FOR EXAMPLE, EVEN AFTER SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS, THE TREE WON'T WITHER.


THIS WAY PLEASE.
TAP
TAP
BUT THERE COULD BE MORE TO IT.
YES.
HAPPY FOREVER ...

THIS ROOM WILL CARRY OUT MY FANTASY?
AT DELIRIUM THE VISITORS' WISHES TAKE FORM...
...WHEN THEY ENTER ONE OF THE SPECIAL ROOMS.
SWISH
FLASH
I'LL OPEN IT FOR YOU.
IT'S LOCKED...
FOR I AM THE KEY.

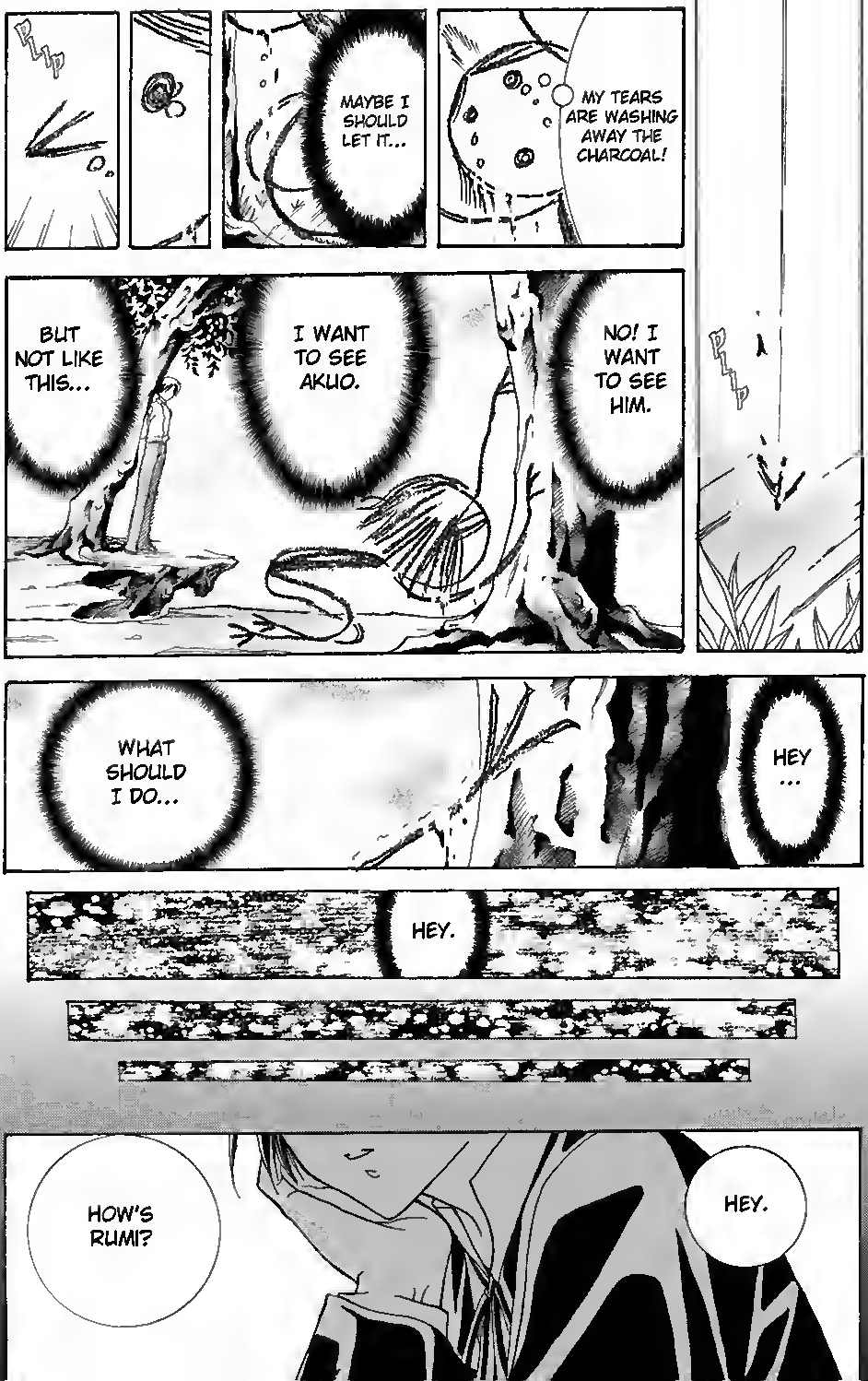
THERE'S NO TURNING BACK AFTER THIS.
CREAK
...A WORD OF WARNING.
THIS IS WHAT I WANT.
I HAVE NOWHERE TO GO BACK TO.
CREAK
I WANT TO PUT MY SOUL IN THAT PAINTING.

I'M INSIDE IT!
IT'S THE SCENE IN THE PAINTING...
OH... AKUO.
!!
MY HAND?!
WHAT IS THIS?
MY RIGHT HAND?!

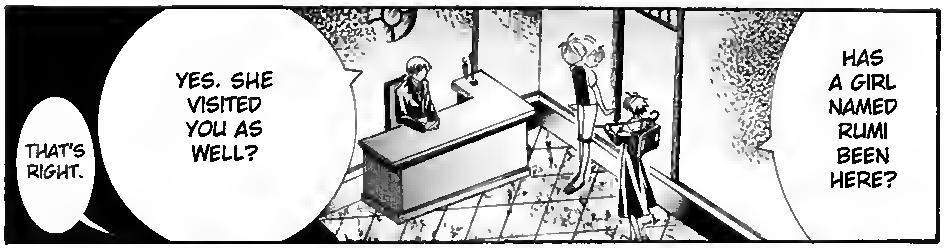

IS THIS MY BODY?
IT CAN'T BE!
WHY?!
THIS...
IT'S CHAR-COAL ...
THIS TEXTURE ...
IT'S FAMILIAR SOMEHOW...
STILL SKETCHING?

WHEN I COME BACK I'LL PAINT YOU IN, AND THEN IT WILL BE COMPLETE.
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO FINISH IT, AKUO?
WE'LL BE LIKE THE FIGURES IN THE PAINTING, TOGETHER FOREVER...
I COULDN'T STAND IT.
...
SHIK
BUT, I...
WE'LL BE APART FOR A WHILE RUMI. BUT YOU CAN MAKE IT.
AKUO.
GASHA
I'D NEVER EVEN HELD A BRUSH BEFORE.
SO I PUT MYSELF IN THE PAINTING.
I WANTED TO BE WITH HIM.
EACH SECOND WAS TOO LONG ...

I COULDN'T DRAW.
THIS CHARCOAL STICK FIGURE WAS THE BEST I COULD DO.
NO.
THE REST OF MY LIFE AS A SCRIBBLE?
!
IN THE PAINTING, THE FLOW OF TIME STOPS FOR YOU.
MY LIFE DOESN'T END IN HERE.
I CAN'T JUST FADE AWAY, TRAPPED IN THIS WORLD ISOLATED FROM TIME...
I CAN'T FACE YOU IN THIS STATE, AKUO.
IF YOU WERE TO REJECT ME...

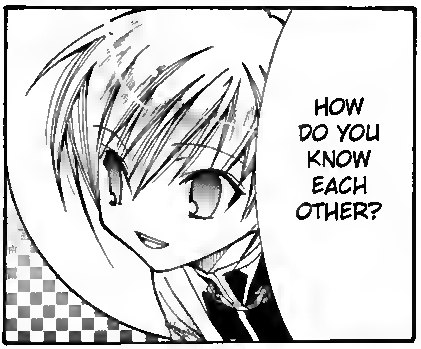

PLIP
MAYBE I SHOULD LET IT...
MY TEARS ARE WASHING AWAY THE CHARCOAL!
BUT NOT LIKE THIS...
I WANT TO SEE AKUO.
NO! I WANT TO SEE HIM.
PLIP
WHAT SHOULD I DO...
HEY ...
HEY.
HOW'S RUMI?
HEY.

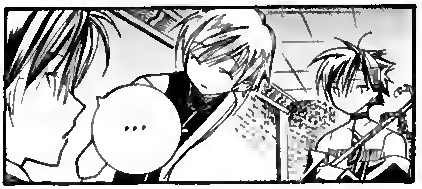
HEY.
CAN YOU SEE INTO THE ROOM WITH YOUR MIND?
YES...
CLICK
A CUSTOMER!
WELCOME!
LONG TIME NO SEE, HIRUKO
Huh?


HAS A GIRL NAMED RUMI BEEN HERE?
YES. SHE VISITED YOU AS WELL?
THAT'S RIGHT.

DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY, KAIRI?
Yes.
I GUESS YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HERE LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE MET HIM.

THE DAY HE ENTERED A ROOM ...


HOW DO YOU KNOW EACH OTHER?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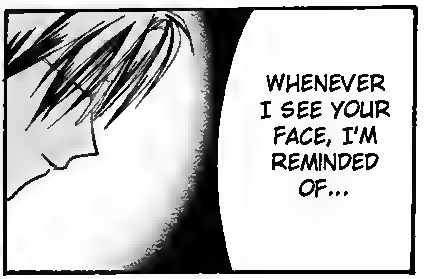
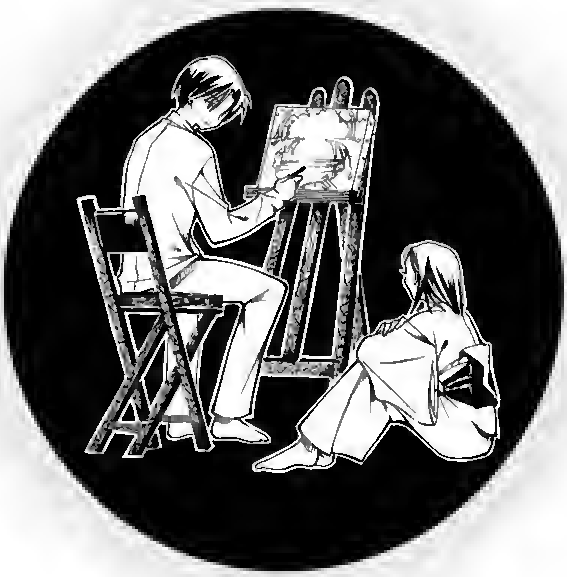
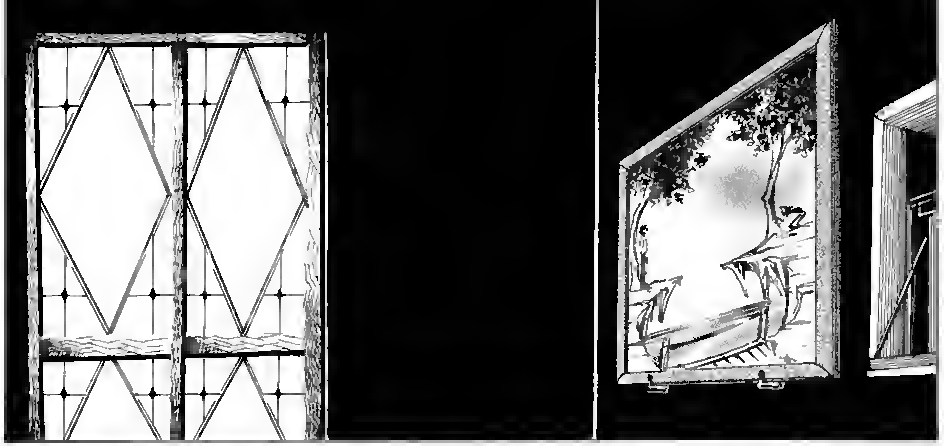

WHENEVER I SEE YOUR FACE, I'M REMINDED OF...

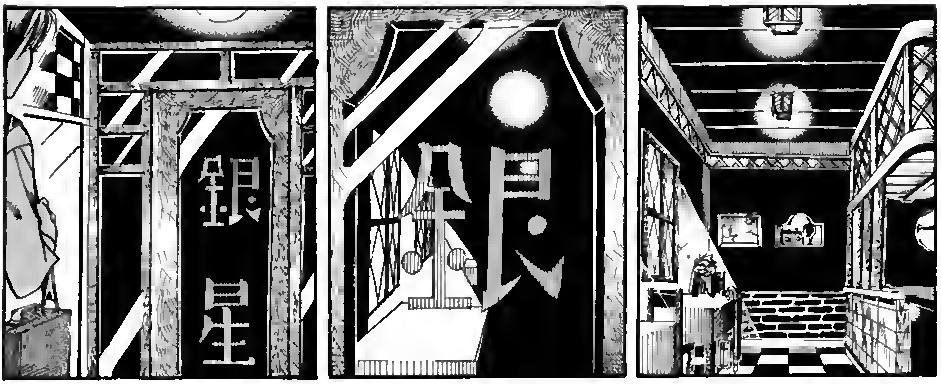
THAT DAY, YOU...
SURE TAKES ME BACK.
ONE OF OUR ROOMS?
SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM..
STRUM
ANYWAY, HIRUKO.
FLIP
What?
Okay, he's back.
YOU'RE NOT REMEMBERING, YOU'RE FANTASIZING!
That vacant laugh...
HEE
HEE
FOOSH

HAS "HIRUKO" BEEN WELL?
WHO KNOWS?
...
CREAK
YOU CAN HAVE WHAT'S LEFT IN THE ROOM...
OH, BY THE WAY.
Okay!
SHIMA, TAKE HIM TO RUMI.

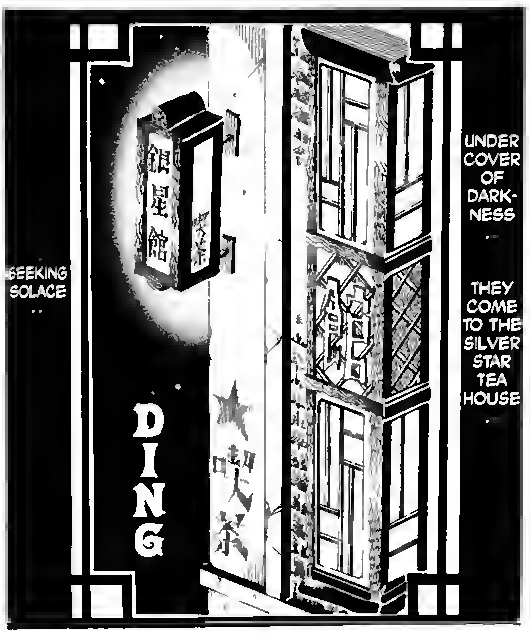
...
I BET RUMI'S VERY HAPPY IN THE PAINTING.
YOU THINK?







THE ELEVENTH NIGHT: THE PAINTING (PART TWO)



IS THERE A BAKU CALLED HIRUKO HERE?
HEY! THAT'S—!
WHY IS MY PAINTING HERE?
YOU...
YOU'RE AKUO NIIMI?
SO, YOU'RE ALIVE?

RUMI HAKARIYA CAME HERE A FEW MONTHS AGO.
HOW DO YOU...?
WHAT?
RUMI?!
CLICK
AND SHE...
WELL, NOW SHE'S INSIDE THE PAINTING.
?

SHE WENT TO THE DELIRIUM.
YOU'D BEEN GONE SO LONG SHE ASSUMED YOU WERE DEAD.
AND TRIED TO JOIN YOUR SPIRIT IN THE PAINTING.

YOU MEAN THE MONSTER THAT'S BEEN HAUNTING MY DREAMS IS RUMI?!
I CAN'T... BELIEVE IT...

I CAME HOME WHEN THE WAR WAS OVER...
I'LL START AT THE BEGINNING ...
WHAT DREAM IS THIS?
...
BUT I WAS TORMENTED BY THIS NIGHTMARE.
I TRIED TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER AND START PAINTING.
"I CAN'T SEE RUMI LIKE THIS."
...WITH MY MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH IN RUINS...
I COULDN'T STAND IT BEING THERE!
THE PAINTING THAT WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY OWN LIFE!
THERE WAS A STRANGE MONSTER IN MY PAINTING ...

IF SHE SEES ME LIKE THIS I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO FINISH IT.
I JUST NEED TO ADD RUMI TO THE PAINTING SO WE CAN START OUR LIVES OVER!
ARGH! TO HAVE THE MOST IMPORTANT PAINTING I'VE CREATED REMAIN UNFINISHED!
BANG
...FINISH...
"FINISH..."
SO IF YOU ERASED THE MONSTER IN YOUR NIGHTMARE YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THE PAINTING?
GO-GO
THAT'S IT!
THAT'S THE MONSTER!
Heh...

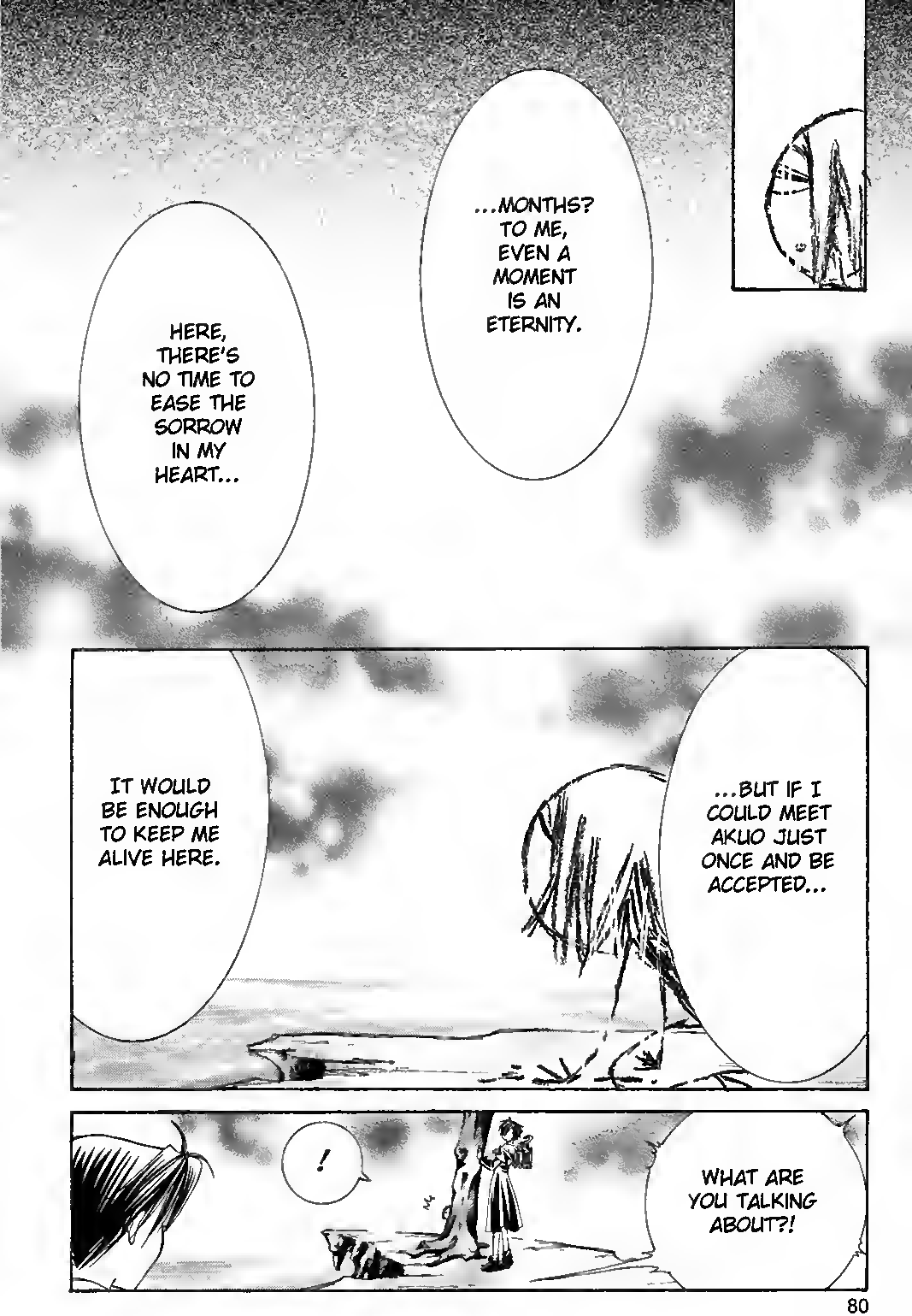
I NOTICED IT WHEN I WAS SKETCHING BUT I JUST PAINTED OVER IT.
I GUESS IT'S ONLY A CHARCOAL SKETCH.
I DON'T REALLY WANT TO GO NEAR IT, BUT...
HOWEVER, AKUO.
IT REALLY MUST HAVE GOTTEN TO YOU.
STRANGE THAT IT STILL BOTHERS ME.
OF COURSE.
THE FLOW OF TIME COULD NEVER ERODE OUR LOVE.
ARE YOU SURE YOU STILL LOVE RUMI AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?

OUR BOND IS STRONG ENOUGH TO OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLE.
THE STRENGTH OF YOUR BOND...
...DEPENDS ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAN ERASE THAT MONSTER.

FOOSH
LET'S SEE THIS BOND OF YOURS.
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

I MUST PROTECT MY BOND WITH RUMI.

COME OUT, MONSTER. I'M GOING TO ERASE YOU.
Gasp
I'VE BROUGHT AKUO WITH ME.
IS THAT RUMI?
AND THIS PAINTING HAS BECOME HIS NIGHTMARE.
HE'S ALIVE.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD TO HOLD BACK THE TEARS ALL THESE MONTHS...
THE CHARCOAL IS FADING.


...MONTHS? TO ME, EVEN A MOMENT IS AN ETERNITY.
HERE, THERE'S NO TIME TO EASE THE SORROW IN MY HEART...
IT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO KEEP ME ALIVE HERE.
...BUT IF I COULD MEET AKUO JUST ONCE AND BE ACCEPTED...
!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

UNGH
TO FINISH THIS PAINTING!
TO PROTECT MY BOND WITH RUMI.
THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE RUMI! I'LL ERASE YOU NOW!
UNGH
UNGH
STOP IT, AKUO.
PLEASE! IT'S ME, RUMI.
I TURNED INTO THE SCRIBBLE I DREW BACK THEN...
SHUT UP!
THE PAINTING CAN'T BE COMPLETE WITH YOU IN IT.
!

HA HA, DISAPPEAR, DISAPPEAR.
PLIP
PLIP
RUMI ...
ALL THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE...
I COULDN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO RETURN.

ONE LAST QUESTION...
HEY...
WOULD YOU STILL PROTECT OUR BOND...?
IF...
...YOU KNEW I WAS DYING.

IS THIS... YOUR BOND?
YES. I'M SURE THAT THING WAS NOT RUMI.
THE REAL RUMI IS MUCH MORE BEAUTIFUL.
SAYING SHE WAS DYING.
HOW COULD I BELIEVE THAT?
HUH
HEY, RUMI!?
SERR
SERRR
SERRR
AT LAST WE MEET, RUMI...

WHY!
WHY DON'T YOU REPLY?!
RUMI?
RUMI!
IT'S OBVIOUS.
UNLIKE THE SCRIBBLE, THIS ONE HAS NO SOUL.
RUMI ...?
THAT WAS...
YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE HER.

OH NO!
I WAS SO OBSESSED WITH FINISHING THE PAINTING THAT I DIDN'T SEE YOU.
SIGH
IT'S MY FAULT!
SH-SH
I'M SORRY, RUMI.
SH-SH
MY FAULT ...
NOOO!
WHAT HAVE I DONE!

RUMI.
THEY DIDN'T WASH AWAY?
HER EYES?
HERE'S WHAT'S LEFT OF RUMI.
TK
RUMI...
SRRK
SRRK
SRRK
SRRK
SRRK
PLEASE.
COME BACK TO ME!
RUMI.

...
AKUO
...
I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN.
I'M SORRY, RUMI...
RUMI ...

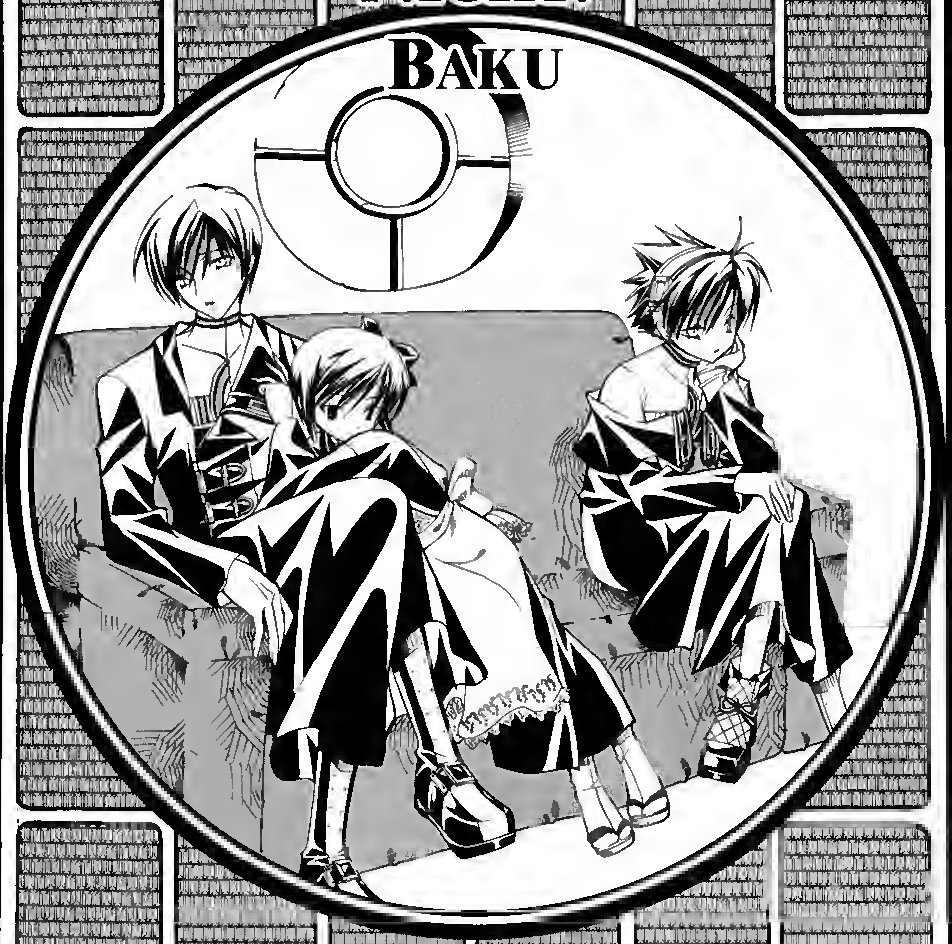
I'LL HONOR OUR BOND UNTIL YOU DIE!
TIME TO WAKE UP.
FWOOSH

CLICK
NO.
IS THE PICTURE FINISHED NOW?
NOT YET.

NO TIME PASSES IN THE PAINTING...
SO I'M GOING TO CREATE TIME FOR RUMI BY ADDING ONE STROKE AFTER ANOTHER.
AND THEN WE CAN CONTINUE OUR FUTURE TOGETHER, HEALTHY FOREVER...
THE RELATIONSHIP IS THEIR BOND...

IN SEVERAL DECADES, AS THE PAINTING KEEPS DEVELOPING ...
...PERHAPS WE MAY SEE A HAPPY OLD COUPLE SURROUNDED BY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN WHO DIDN'T EXIST IN REAL LIFE...

The Twelfth Night: Baku



Room for Rent
空部屋有
★銀星館
Room for Rent
空部屋有
★銀星館
UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS
SEEKING SOLACE ...
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE ...
CLICK
CLICK
CASH
CLICK
SIGH...
IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD...
THE REPAIRS COST TOO MUCH...
DING
Hahahaha...
IT'S AS DARK AND GLOOMY AS EVERYONE SAYS!

WHERE'S HIRUKO?
IF YOU NEED HELP WITH A NIGHTMARE, PLEASE COME BACK TONIGHT.
I WONDER WHAT HE WANTS?
OH NO, THAT'S NOT WHY I'M HERE.
I JUST WONDERED WHERE A BAKU WOULD LIVE.
I'M JUST KILLING TIME.
Hmph. A joker.

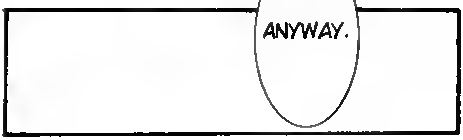
ARE YOU HIRUKO?
NO, HE'S STILL UPSTAIRS.
UPSTAIRS? OH, RIGHT. THE POSTER. SO YOU CAN LIVE HERE?
How cheeky!
AAAH!
HUNH
KITTY!
YOU SCARED ME...
Love at first sight
SPROINGG

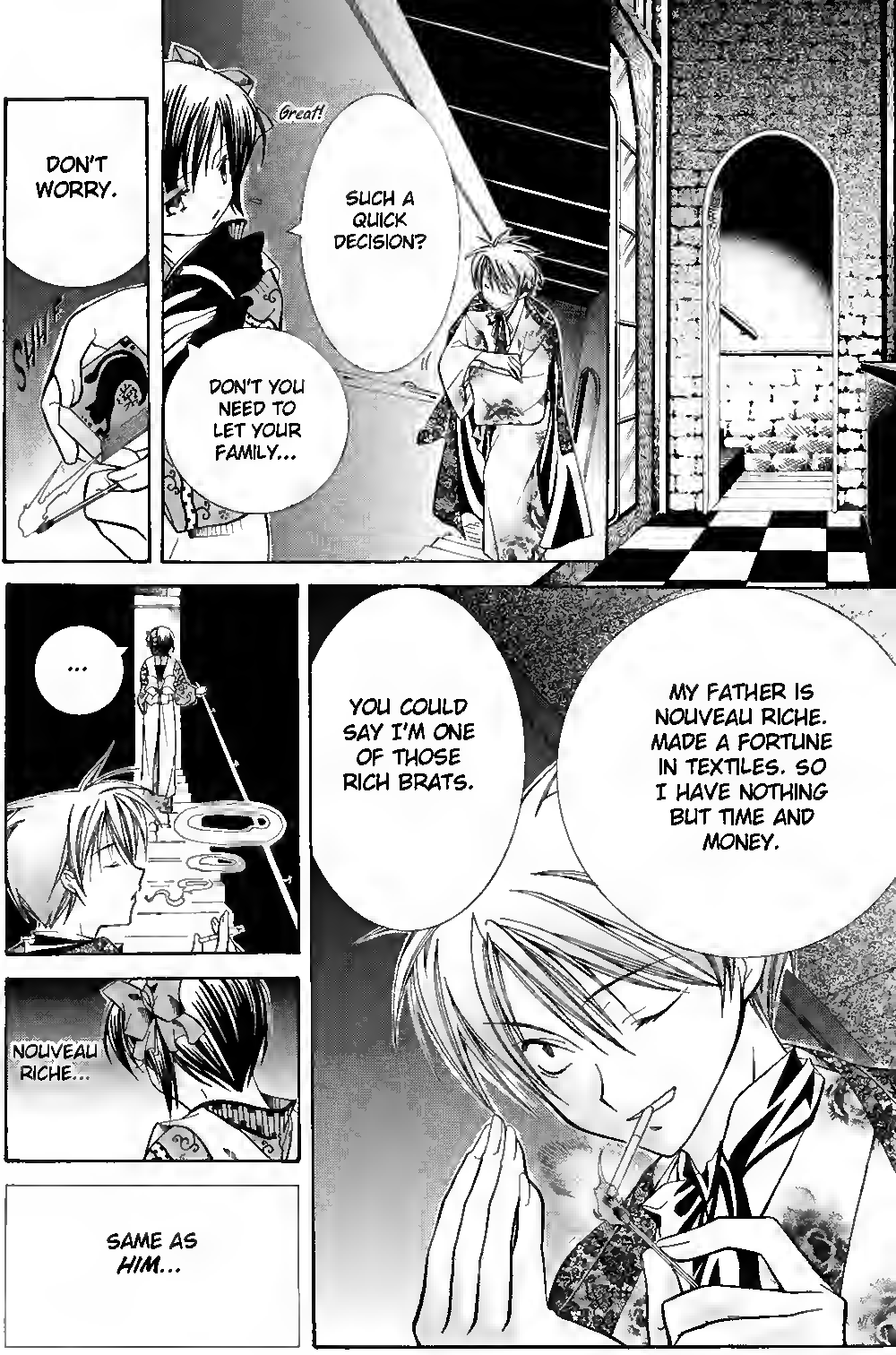
I'LL TAKE THE ROOM !!
Meow

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
MY DREAM GIRL!

TAP
TAP
...HIFUMI MISUMI!
SHIIN!
NICE TO MEET YOU, HIFUMI MISUMI.

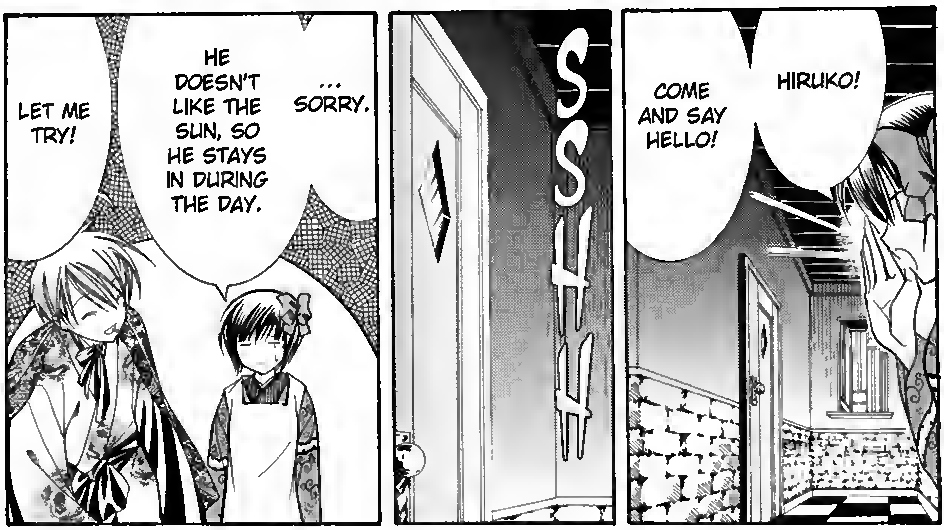
Meow
AH?! THAT'S MY PET CAT, NAAMU!


ANYWAY.


DON'T WORRY.
Great!
SUCH A QUICK DECISION?
DON'T YOU NEED TO LET YOUR FAMILY...
...
NOUVEAU RICHE...
SAME AS HIM...
YOU COULD SAY I'M ONE OF THOSE RICH BRATS.
MY FATHER IS NOUVEAU RICHE. MADE A FORTUNE IN TEXTILES. SO I HAVE NOTHING BUT TIME AND MONEY.

I'M MIZUKI ASAHINA. I OWN THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE.
AND I'LL BE YOUR LANDLORD.
Mizuki...
YOU RUN IT ON YOUR OWN? I'M IMPRESSED.
I WOULDN'T BE RENTING ROOMS IF I WAS GOOD AT IT.
I SUPPOSE THE TEAHOUSE IS PRETTY EMPTY AT LUNCHTIME?
FIVE YEARS AGO IT BECAME KNOWN AS A PLACE TO BRING YOUR BAD DREAMS.
SO, THE BAKU CAME HERE FIVE YEARS AGO?
HUH?
...
WELL, I GUESS BAD DREAMS HAVE BROUGHT US TOGETHER. ♡

THIS IS HIRUKO'S.
HERE WE ARE.
THERE ARE FOUR ROOMS. ONE IS MINE.


LET ME TRY!
HE DOESN'T LIKE THE SUN, SO HE STAYS IN DURING THE DAY.
... SORRY.
SSSH
COME AND SAY HELLO!
HIRUKO!

If not for him this place could be a cozy love nest for us two!
...No, no. Wait a minute.
Jerk! How dare you!
SPLASH
AH!
HEY, HIRU...
THIS HIRUKO IS ALREADY LIVING WITH MIZUKI...
PRETTY BOLD, POUNDING ON HIRUKO'S DOOR LIKE THAT.
BANG
BANG
BANG
HEY HIRUKO! COME OUT, YOU JERK!
SAY HELLO TO HIFUMI MISUMI. HE'S OUR NEW TENANT.
WHERE IS HE?
HERE
...WHAT'S ALL THIS NOISE?
CRASH

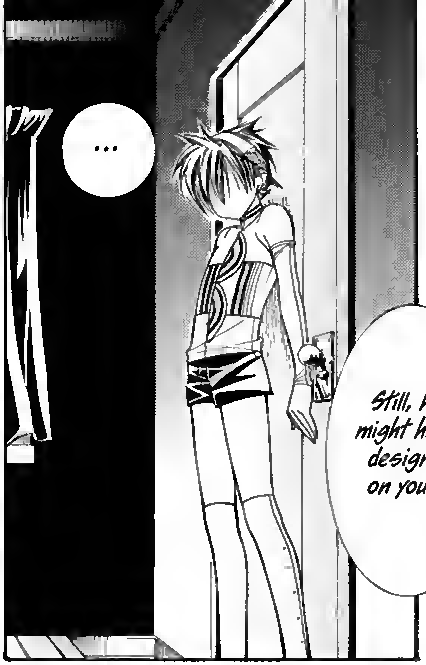
... SO ...
WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MIZUKI?
HEY... HEY!
YOU'RE HIRUKO?
Hmph!
YOU'RE JUST A KID!
HUH?
YOU'RE NOT LOVERS, ARE YOU? I'M TALKING TO YOU!
NUK
NUK
Tee Hee

THAT WOULD BE IMPOS-SIBLE.

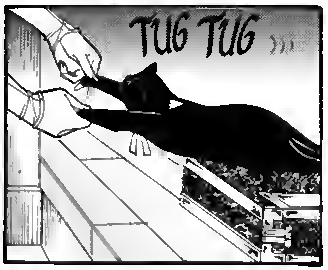
BYE.
OH, I SEE! NOT YOUR TYPE, HUH?
Little twerp.

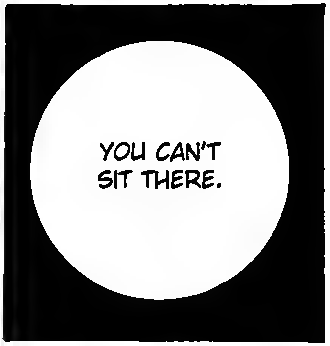
LIKE SHE SAID.

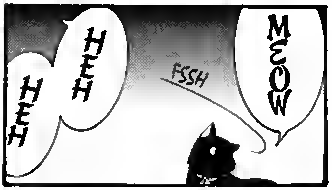
...WHERE DID THAT CAT COME FROM?


...
Still, he might have designs on you...

...YOU WANT TO GET IN MY SUITCASE, TOO?


TUG TUG


YOU CAN'T SIT THERE.


MEOW
FSSH
HEH HEH

HERE'S YOUR KEY.
CLICK
WHAT'S IN THE EXTRA ROOM?
WHAT'S IN THERE?
HUH?
AND WHY IS IT PAD-LOCKED?
THAT'S MY BROTHER'S ROOM.
BROTHER?!

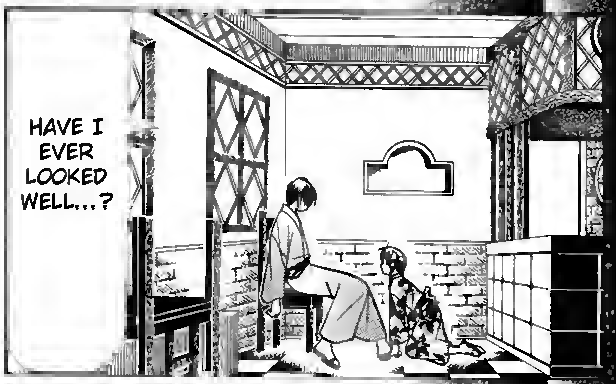
YES.
HE DISAPPEARED TWO YEARS AGO.
WHY? HE LEFT YOU BEHIND?!
THEN ...
...
I'LL STAY WITH YOU FROM NOW ON!
IT'S OK. THE SHOP WAS A GIFT.
I'LL HELP WITH THE TEAHOUSE. WE'LL MAKE IT REALLY PROFITABLE ...
WHAT?!
...HE IS MY ONLY FAMILY...
OR WAS.

I HAVEN'T CHANGED A THING SINCE HE DISAPPEARED.
BECAUSE MY BROTHER WAS HERE...
...BUT I CAN'T LEAVE IT.
...SO ARE OUR MEMORIES.
TEA ROOM
...HE'S VERY KIND.
BE RIGHT BACK!
BUT I'LL BE BACK SOON.
I HAVE TO GET SOME THINGS FROM HOME.
Oh, and I'll need a bed from you.
...

STILL ...
AZUSA. MY BROTHER.
EVEN TODAY ...
WHAT'S LOCKED IN THE EXTRA ROOM?
THIS THING.
JUST ...
WHAT GOOD IS LOCKING IT? THE MEMORIES REMAIN...
THE MEMORY OF THAT NIGHT LIES BEYOND THIS DOOR...

FIVE YEARS AGO
銀屋館

AZUSA, YOU LOOK PALE.


HAVE I EVER LOOKED WELL...?

THIS NIGHTMARE HAS BEEN PLAGUING ME FOR SO LONG...
...CHEER UP, AZUSA!
WE'RE GOING TO LIVE HERE TOGETHER!
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SUCH A MODERN SHOP?!
I BET THAT RICH JERK BUILT THIS PLACE JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT.
IT MUST HAVE HURT HIM TO PART WITH IT TO GET RID OF US...
GET RID OF US?
...DON'T YOU GET IT?
NOW THAT MOTHER'S DEAD, HE'S CUT HIS TIES WITH US.
HE HAS CHILDREN WITH HIS REAL WIFE.

I CAN'T FORGIVE HIM FOR WHAT HE DID TO US.
...TO ANOTHER WOMAN...
FOR GETTING OUR MOTHER PREGNANT WHILE HE WAS STILL MARRIED...
AND THEN LEAVING US IN THIS SITUATION.

...IS BEING BROUGHT INTO THIS WORLD AS AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD.
BUT WHAT I REALLY CAN'T FORGIVE...

I'M CURSED!
I DROVE OUR MOTHER TO HER DEATH.
IF ONLY I HAD NEVER BEEN BORN...!
STOP, AZUSA!
MOTHER WAS SICK! SHE DIDN'T DIE BECAUSE OF YOU!
PLEASE STOP BLAMING YOURSELF!
YES.
YES! LET'S OPEN THE SHOP.
I'LL WORK SO HARD!
SO...
I'LL LEARN TO MAKE DELICIOUS COFFEE, AND YOU CAN DRINK IT EVERY MORNING!

CHEER UP...
...HEY, AZUSA.
TELL ME ABOUT THE BAD DREAM.
I SEE MYSELF FADING SLOWLY AWAY.
BUT IT'S JUST A DREAM...

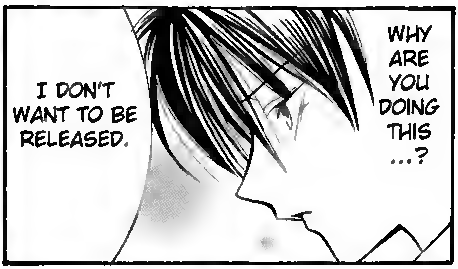
WHY THIS DREAM?
YOU'RE ALL I HAVE...
DON'T DISAPPEAR, EVEN IN A DREAM.
HNNN
NO.
I WAS BORN TO BE THIS PERSON... IN MY HEART I WANT TO REJECT THIS LIFE.
...IT'S IN MY BLOOD...
...ANYWAY... IT DOESN'T MATTER...

...HE'S BEEN SHUT IN FOR TWO DAYS...
WHY IS HE DOING THIS TO HIMSELF...
CRACK
WH...
WHAT IS THAT?
!
THINK
IS THAT ...?!
... WHAT ...
MY BODY'S GRADUALLY FADING AWAY...

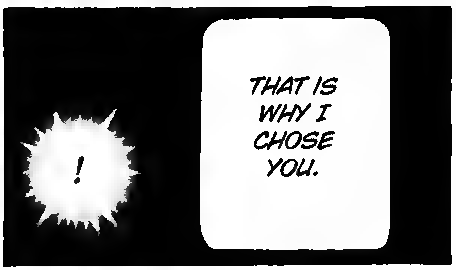
MY NAME IS HIRUKO.
I AM A BAKU. I EAT DREAMS.
I CAN SAVE YOU FROM YOUR NIGHT-MARE.
I WILL RELEASE YOU FROM TORMENT, BUT YOU MUST GIVE UP THIS EXISTENCE AS AZUSA.
YOU WILL BE REBORN AS THE BAKU HIRUKO.

I CAN NEITHER BE BORN NOR CAN I DIE.
...I AM SUSPENDED IN BETWEEN.
...THIS ENDLESS STATE IS PAINFULLY SIMILAR TO YOUR DREAM OF DISAPPEARING...

...


WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS ...?
I DON'T WANT TO BE RELEASED.

...ALL I WANT IS TO ABANDON THIS LIFE.
BY TONIGHT, MY BODY WILL FADE AWAY COMPLETELY...


THAT IS WHY I CHOSE YOU.
!

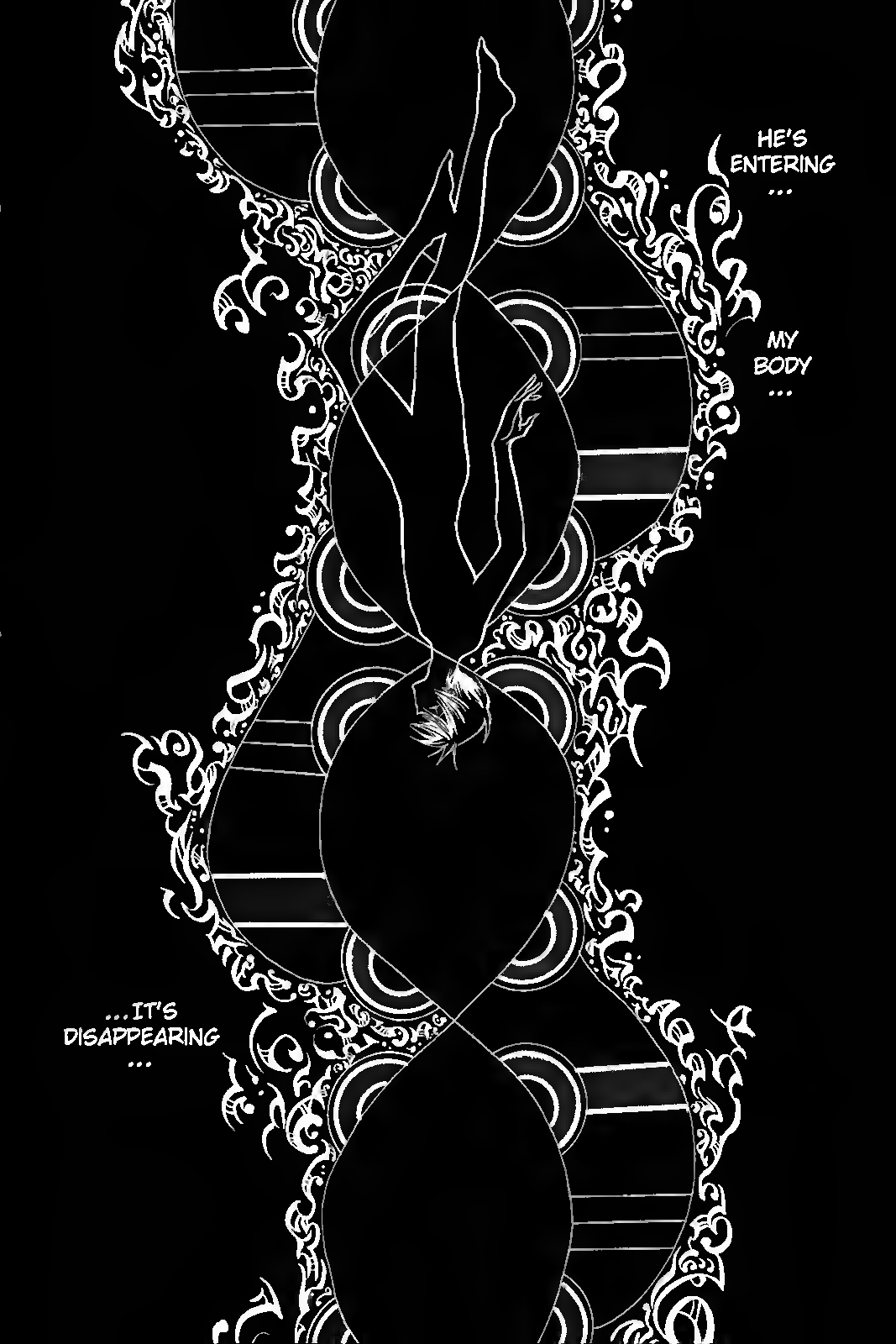
SO YOU...
...CAME HERE IN SEARCH OF A PLACE TO DIE.
I DO NOT WISH TO ERASE MY EXISTENCE.
MY ABILITIES AND A FEW MEMORIES WILL REMAIN.
BUT I CAN RID MYSELF OF CONSCIOUSNESS ...
SO YOU WANT TO TRANSFER THE BAKU'S EXISTENCE TO ME?

YOU HAVE ALREADY GIVEN UP ON LIFE...
SO YOU HAVE NO REASON TO REFUSE, EVEN IF IT MEANS GOING MAD.
THE THOUGHTS of...?
YES. BUT IT WILL MEAN HAVING THE THOUGHTS OF A BAKU.
SWOOSH
...HOW I WILL ANSWER.
...
YOU ALREADY KNOW...
I DON'T CARE ANYMORE.

WHEN YOU AWAKE, YOU WILL BE A DREAM-EATING BAKU.
HHM
MM
...
THIS IS YOUR LAST NIGHT AS HUMAN.
THE LAST DAY FOR US BOTH.

FOOSH
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

FOOSH
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.


HE'S ENTERING ...
MY BODY ...
...IT'S DISAPPEARING ...

THROB
THESE ARE...
THE BAKU'S ...
MEMORIES ...?

I DIDN'T SLEEP AT ALL.
AZUSA ...
BUT...
LAST NIGHT WAS JUST A BAD DREAM...
TOH
TOH
THIS IS...
UH... UMM...
...

...I'M SO GLAD.
SNIFF
SNIFF
YOU'RE STILL AZUSA, AREN'T YOU?
HERE ...
I MADE YOU SOME COFFEE...
...I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW...
DRIP
SPRUIT
OH! AZUSA?!
I'M SO SORRY!
BLOOD ?!

WHEN YOU AWAKE, YOU WILL BE A DREAM-EATING BAKU.
LIKE...
IT'S REJECTING HUMAN FOOD.
...MY BODY FEELS STRANGE.
IS SOMETHING WRONG!?
I CAN ONLY EAT NIGHTMARES.
I SEE ...
IT'S JUST THAT AZUSA IS GONE.
I'M OK... I HAVEN'T CHANGED.
HELLO? IS ANYONE THERE?

YOU LOOK PRETTY ODD, TOO.
SAD THAT IT'S JUST A TOURIST ATTRACTION NOW.
I REALLY LIKE SILVER STAR'S COFFEE...
IF YOU REALLY ARE A BAKU...
...THEN DO ME A FAVOR...
...AND EAT THIS NIGHTMARE I'VE BEEN HAVING.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT MONEY OR THINGS.
THREE YEARS LATER
HIRUKO.
BUT PEOPLE WANT TO THANK YOU, SO THEY SEND GIFTS.
I KNOW YOU DON'T NEED THEM.
I WONDER WHEN...
I STARTED CALLING HIM THAT ...
IT'S NOT LIKE I CARED ABOUT HELPING THEM.

...BUT YOU'LL NEVER TRY IT.
I LEARNED HOW TO MAKE DELICIOUS COFFEE.
IT'S A SHAME.
BUT RUMORS ABOUT THE BAKU AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE HAVE SPREAD.
I'M OKAY AS LONG AS I HAVE THE NIGHTMARES.
THE AZUSA IN ME IS DRIFTING AWAY.
ARE YOU REALLY OKAY WITH PEOPLE'S TERRIBLE DREAMS?
THAT'S HOW WE STAY IN BUSINESS NOW.

HEH HEH
LIKE HE SAID, THESE ARE A BAKU'S THOUGHTS.
THERE'S NOTHING MORE SATISFYING TO ME...
MY MIND IS AWASH WITH THE NIGHTMARES. I'M FIXATED ON WHERE MY NEXT DREAM WILL COME FROM.
...EVEN SCARIER DREAMS?
WHAT NEXT?
ARE YOU GOING TO DO THIS UNTIL YOU'RE DEAD?
SOUNDS LIKE AN ADDICTION ...
I'VE STARTED TO FEEL DISSATISFIED WITH ORDINARY DREAMS.

THIS ENDLESS STATE OF MEANING-LESSNESS ...
I'M STARTING TO UNDER-STAND HOW HE FELT.
...A BAKU CAN NEITHER BE BORN NOR CAN IT DIE..
EVEN IF I DESIRE IT...
THERE WILL NEVER BE AN END.
NO END.
HEH HEH ...!

YOU LOOK TERRIBLE, HIRUKO.
YOU AREN'T EVEN EATING YOUR NIGHTMARES...
DAZE
...THAT'S NOT IT.
I WANT A DIFFERENT ENDING THAN HIS.
THE PLACE WHERE I WILL DIE...
THE THING I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR...
NIGHT
HIS MEMORIES...
THIS IS... THE DELIRIUM.
THERE...
THIS CHILD.
FIVE YEARS AGO... THE ONLY NIGHTMARE HE DIDN'T CONSUME...

WITH THAT CHILD ...
HEH
...INTERESTING.
HEH
PLEASE, HIRUKO!
PLEASE DON'T GO!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?!
I CAN DIE...
CRASH
LET ME HELP!
I CAN'T REACH HIM ANY-MORE.
THERE'S NO HOPE...
IS THIS WHAT A BAKU IS...?
HEH
HEH

HIRUKO ISN'T HERE ANYMORE.
IT WAS HIS CHAIR.
I WONDER IF I SHOULD THROW THE CHAIR AWAY.
DING

ARE YOU...
...MIZUKI...?
WELCOME HOME.

HAHAHA... "WELCOME HOME"?
IT'S ALREADY DARK.
I'LL GO PREPARE DINNER..
JUST LIKE A WIFE!
SHE'S STILL GLOOMY.
SIGH
HEY, MIZUKI!

I'LL FIND YOUR BROTHER FOR YOU!
HE'S GOING TO BE MY BROTHER-IN-LAW AFTER ALL!
HUH?
IT'S OKAY.
BUT...
THANK YOU!
FSH
What?

MY BROTHER ...
...IS SITTING RIGHT HERE. HIRUKO.

The Thirteenth Night: Kagome

...Mizuki, I'm sorry.

I'm home ...

DING

Under cover of darkness

They come to the Silver Star Tea House

Seeking solace

I looked everywhere, but there was no trace of your brother...

It's really okay, Hifumi.

Looking won't get you anywhere.

Looking around with no clue.

How dare you be so cold?! This is your fault!

STOMP

Is Hiruko the Baku here?

DING

YANK

Shut up! Come back...

!

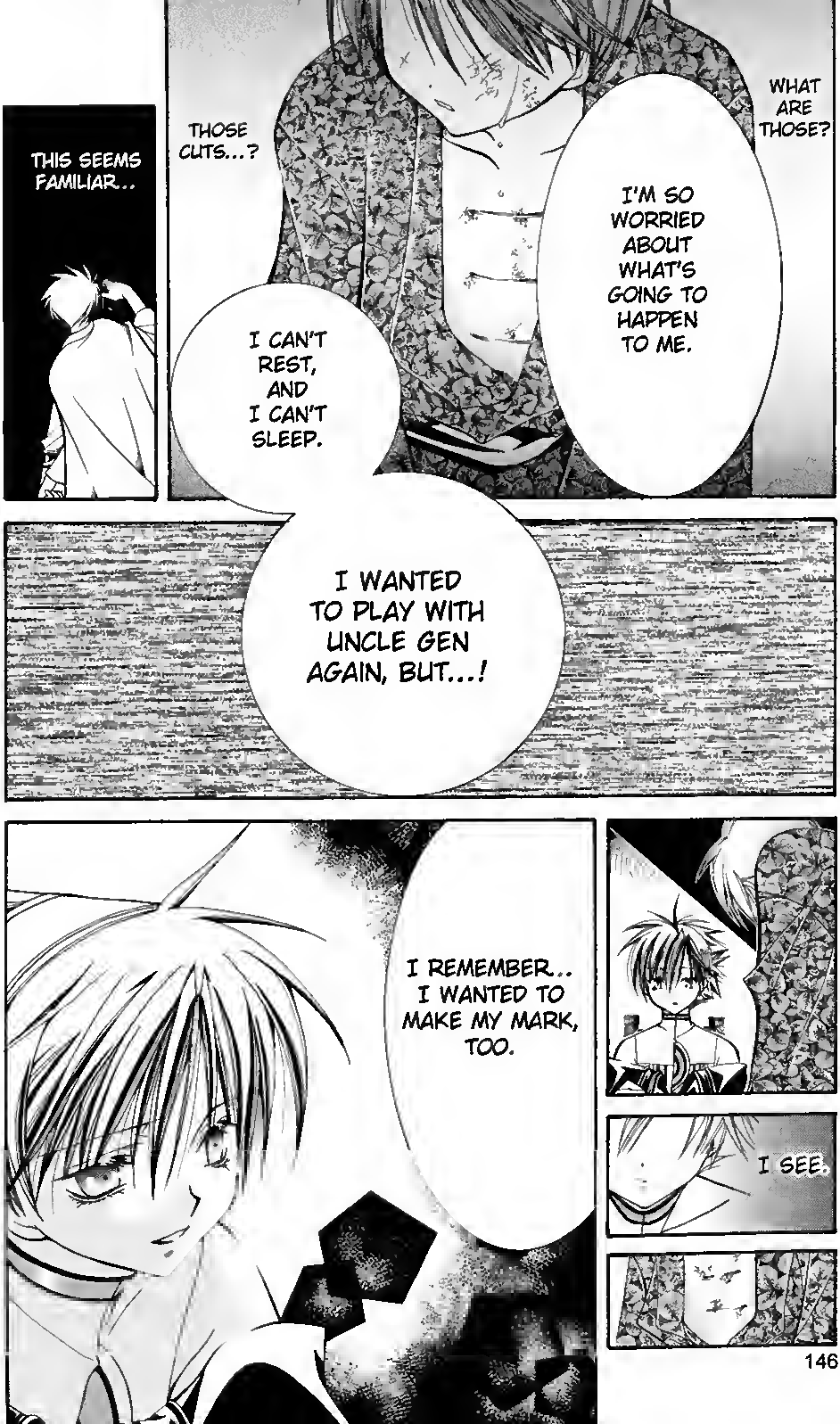
HIFUMI?!
...
HIFUMI
...
I'M..
NO, I'M HIFUMI! WHO ARE YOU?!
HIFUMI! WHO ARE YOU?
SHUT UP! STOP PRETENDING TO BE ME!
ARGH
HOW WOULD I PRETEND ...?
HMM
THEY REALLY DO LOOK ALIKE.

GENZO WORKED FOR MY FAMILY. HE USED TO LIVE IN A SMALL SHED OUT BACK.

...I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.
HE'D PLAY KAGOME WITH US.
HE DRANK, BUT HE WAS KIND TO THE NEIGHBOR KIDS, TOO...
HE DISAP-PEARED A FEW YEARS AGO.

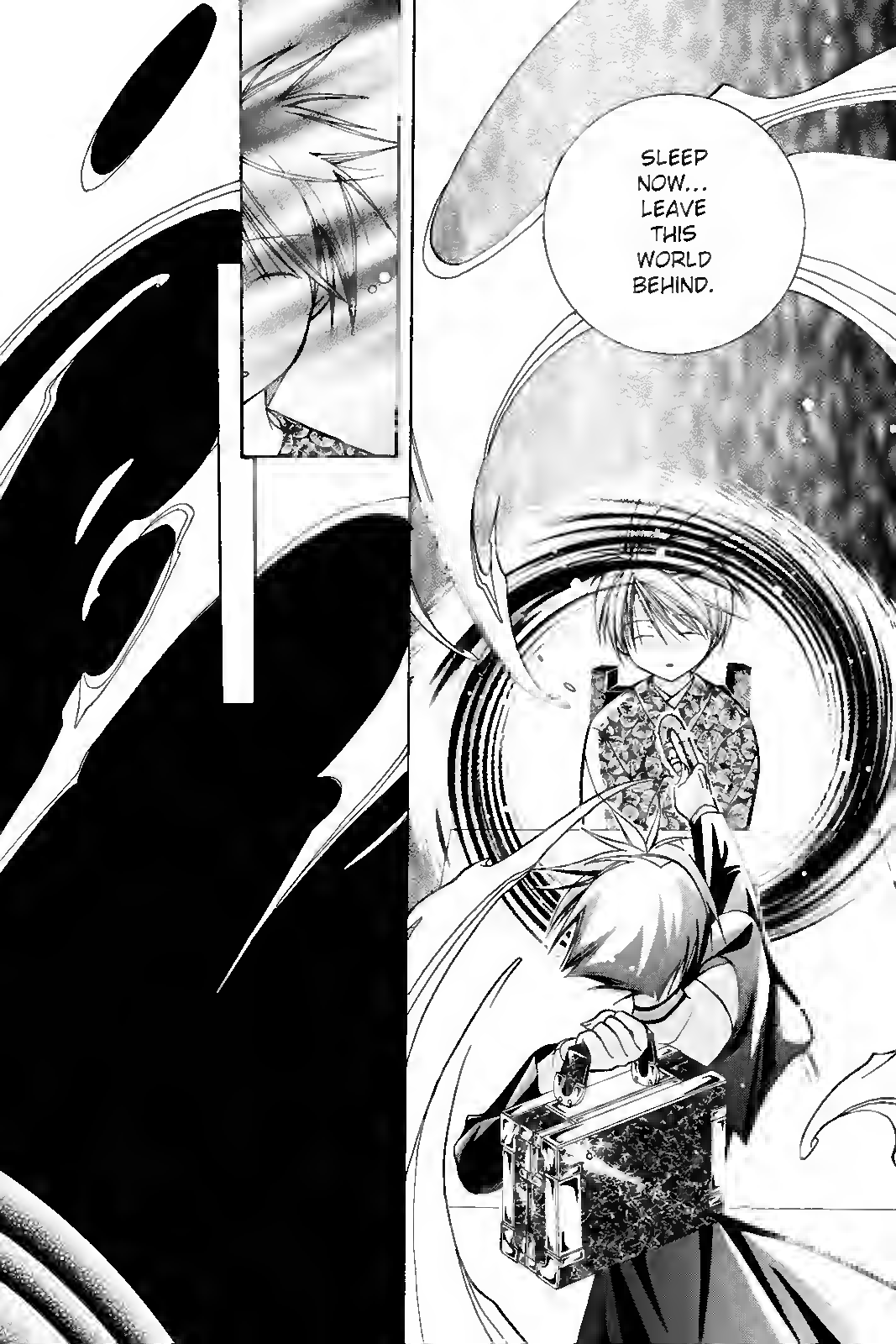
WHEN HE DIDN'T COME BACK I STARTED TO HAVE THIS NIGHTMARE...
FRIENDS...
HE LOOKED AFTER US WHEN WE WERE TOO WEAK TO GO OUTSIDE.
SNIFF
UNCLE GEN WAS SO KIND...
HE GUESSES UNCLE GEN... BUT INSTEAD OF UNCLE GEN BECOMING THE DEMON...
WHO'S BEHIND YOU NOW?
GENZO...
THE CRANE AND TURTLE FELL
...AND A DEMON APPEARS.
IN THE DAWN
KAGOME, KAGOME, BIRD IN A CAGE, COME OUT, KAGOME, COME OUT...
I'M PLAYING HAPPILY...
UNCLE... GEN.
THE DEMON EATS UNCLE GEN!

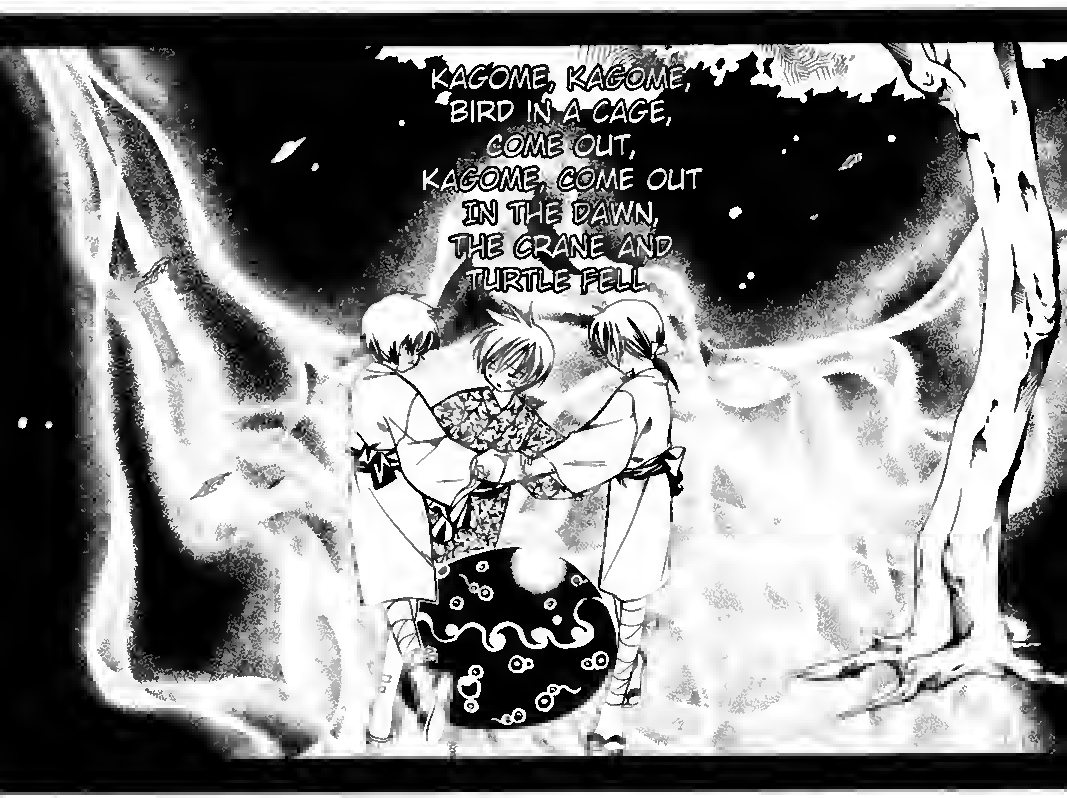
PLIP
...KEEP PLAYING.
PLIP
WE WERE SO SCARED WE WENT ALONG WITH IT.
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
BUT THE DREAM COMES BACK AND THE DEMON EATS MY FRIENDS ONE BY ONE...
Ugh.
AND ALL MY FRIENDS HAVE DISAPPEARED IN REAL LIFE!
YOU HAVE TO STOP IT! PLEASE, HIRUKO!
CRASH
Don't use my face to plead with Hiruko!
SO...
I ONLY HAVE A FEW LEFT.
NGHH


THIS SEEMS FAMILIAR...
THOSE CUTS...?
WHAT ARE THOSE?
I'M SO WORRIED ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME.
I CAN'T REST, AND I CAN'T SLEEP.
I WANTED TO PLAY WITH UNCLE GEN AGAIN, BUT...!
I REMEMBER... I WANTED TO MAKE MY MARK, TOO.
I SEE.

PSH
...THROW IT AWAY.
GENZO...
SAW IT OFF...
PSH
HEY, COME HERE.
...WEIRDOES.
?
DON'T ORDER ME AROUND!
IT DOESN'T MATTER, JUST DO IT.
I DON'T GET IT.
HUH?
MAYBE HE KNOWS WHERE UNCLE GEN IS?!
UNLESS...
DING
?
MIZUKI! I WON'T BE GONE LONG!
FINE, I'LL DO IT.

HEY, HIRUKO!
OH!
HMM?
Okay.
LET'S GO TOO.
WILL ALL MY FRIENDS COME BACK?
WILL THINGS CHANGE WHEN I WAKE UP?
I REALLY WANT TO SEE UNCLE GEN AGAIN!
...
WE HAVE TO GET RID OF THAT DEMON!
FO
OSH


SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.


KAGOME, KAGOME,
BIRD IN A CAGE,
COME OUT,
KAGOME, COME OUT
IN THE DAWN,
THE CRANE AND
TURTLE FELL

AH!
...
HEITA.
WHO'S
BEHIND
YOU
NOW?

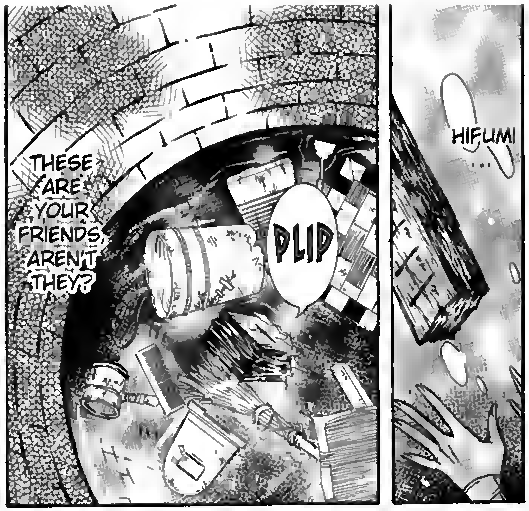
PLIP
IT'S GOING TO EAT HEITA..
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, HIRUKO?!
!
THIS NIGHTMARE ENDS TONIGHT.
HIRUKO!
WHY AREN'T YOU HELPING ?!
KAGOME, KAGOME
I BELIEVED IN YOU!
WHO'S BEHIND YOU NOW?
NO...
...KEEP GOING.
PLIP
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO EAT ME?!
?!
...I'M FINISHED.
EVERYONE'S BEEN EATEN
YOU'RE EVIL...
MY TURN NOW.
!

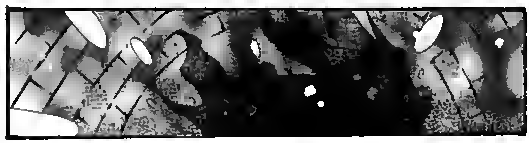
SCREECH
IT FEELS LIKE IT'S SLICING INTO MY BODY.
SCREECH
IT HURTS!
SCREECH
SCREECH...
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?!
SCREECH
SCREECH
UNCLE GEN... PLAY WITH ME...
SCREECH
DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING!
SCREECH
HE WOULD LOOK AFTER MY FRIENDS WHEN THEY WERE SICK.
HE CALLED ME HIFUMI.
YOU REALLY LIKE HIM.
...YES I DO.
SCREECH

I WAS JEALOUS OF THE OTHER CHILDREN WHO PLAYED WITH UNCLE GEN.
WE COULDN'T GO OUTSIDE.
BUT WE PLAYED WITH HIM IN OUR DREAMS.
THAT'S ALL IT EVER WAS...
?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU CAN'T!
OONK
NO! I'M SCARED!
You're going to go inside the demon!
...THE PAIN HAS STOPPED.
THE NOISE TOO.
I CAN'T MOVE MY BODY ...
LET'S GO AND SEE YOUR FRIENDS.
WHAT?
SWISH
HMM

WAH
PLIP
EVERYONE
...

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT ...!
UNCLE GEN!
TIME TO WAKE UP.

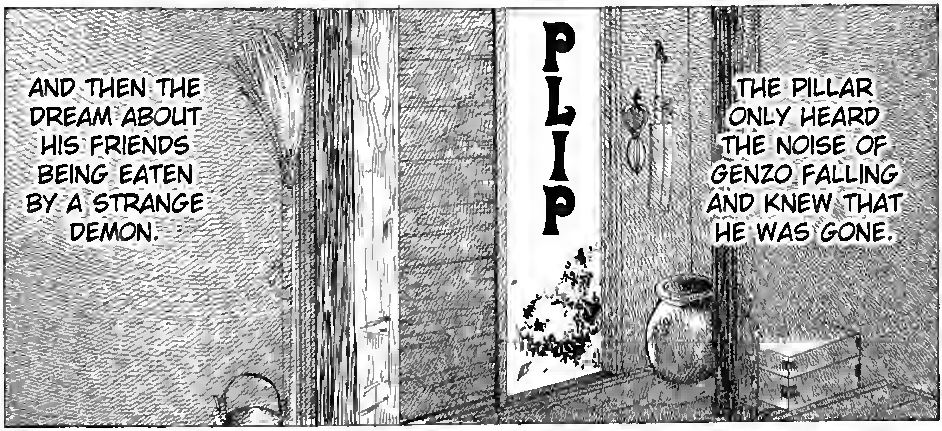

THESE ARE YOUR FRIENDS, AREN'T THEY?
PLIP
HIFUMI...



UNCLE GEN.
IF YOU STAY DOWN THERE NO ONE WILL FIND YOU.

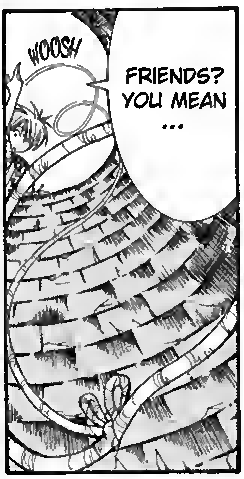
Where are you, Hiruko?

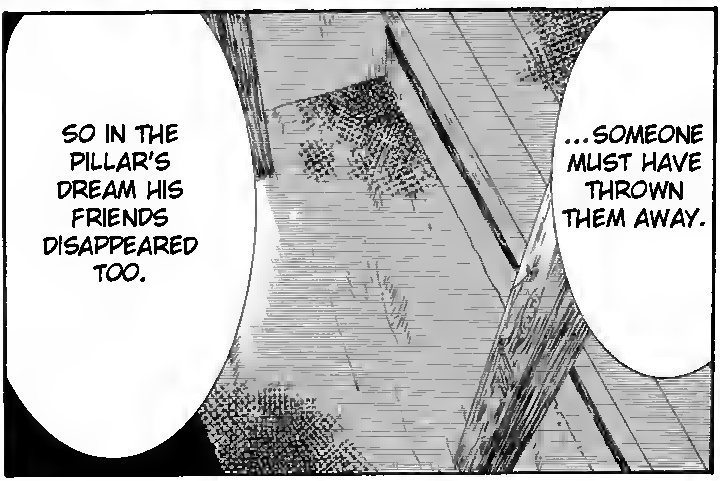
WHAT?!
HELP ME CARRY THIS STUFF OUT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY WELL?!
!
DRL
CLACK
HEY!
"TO FIND GENZO, GO HOME AND SAW OFF THE SCRATCHED UP PILLAR IN YOUR SHED AND THROW IT IN THE WELL."
PSH
CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT YOU SAID AT THE SILVER STAR?
Why do I have to do this?!
SHHP
NO ONE FOUND HIM, SO THEY ASSUMED HE WAS MISSING.
GENZO PROBABLY GOT DRUNK AND TUMBLED INTO THE WELL.
AND THE DEMON IN HIS DREAM WAS THE WELL.
THAT CHILD WAS THE PILLAR I ASKED YOU TO SAW.


AND THEN THE DREAM ABOUT HIS FRIENDS BEING EATEN BY A STRANGE DEMON.
PLIP
THE PILLAR ONLY HEARD THE NOISE OF GENZO FALLING AND KNEW THAT HE WAS GONE.

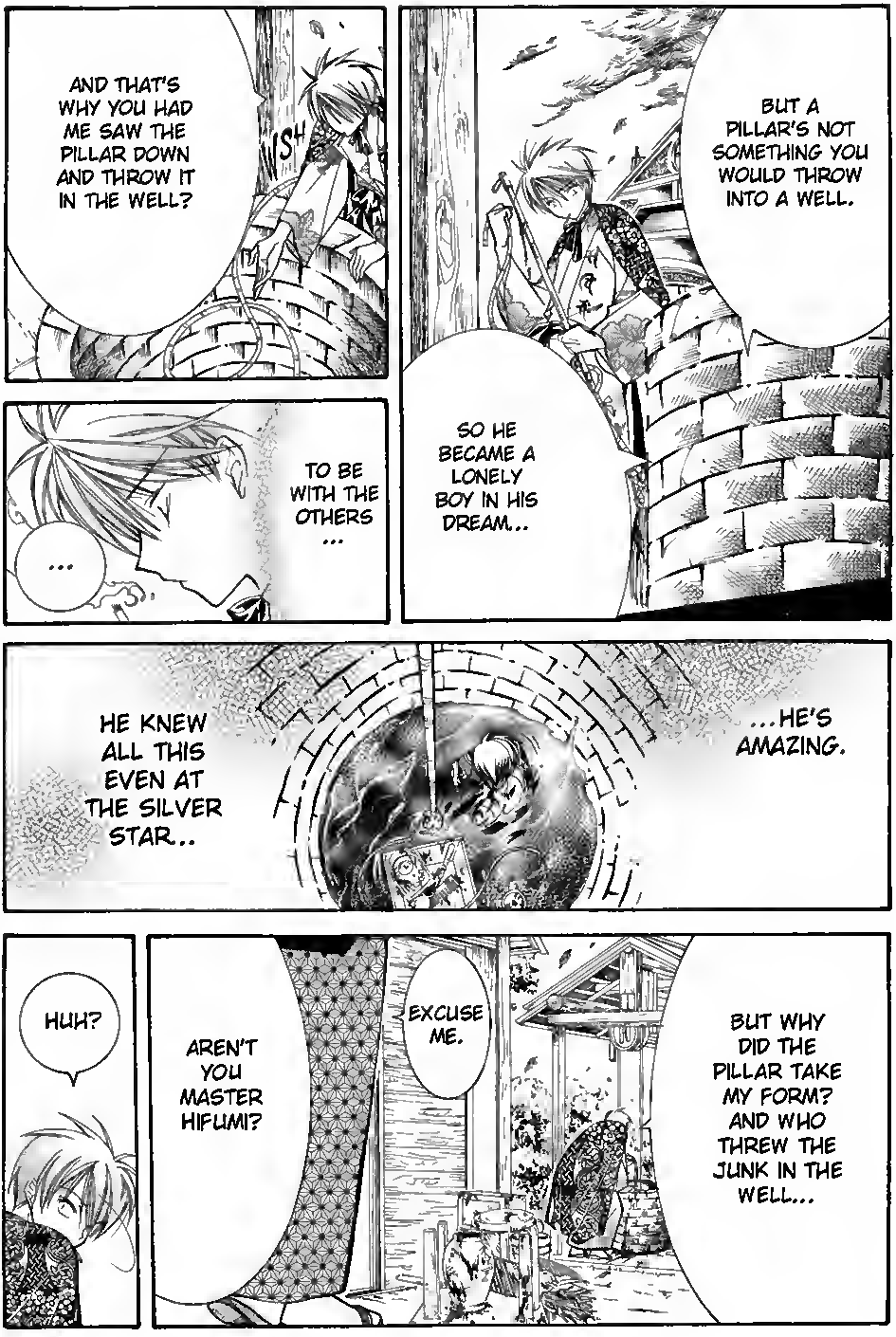
YOU SEE, IT WAS ALL BROKEN, UNUSABLE STUFF. BUT GENZO REPAIRED THEM.

YES, ALL THIS JUNK.


WOOSH
FRIENDS? YOU MEAN ...


SO IN THE PILLAR'S DREAM HIS FRIENDS DISAPPEARED TOO.
...SOMEONE MUST HAVE THROWN THEM AWAY.

HE CARED FOR US WHEN WE WERE TOO WEAK TO GO OUTSIDE.


AND THAT'S WHY YOU HAD ME SAW THE PILLAR DOWN AND THROW IT IN THE WELL?
ISH
BUT A PILLAR'S NOT SOMETHING YOU WOULD THROW INTO A WELL.
SO HE BECAME A LONELY BOY IN HIS DREAM...
...
TO BE WITH THE OTHERS ...
HE KNEW ALL THIS EVEN AT THE SILVER STAR..
...HE'S AMAZING.
HUH?
AREN'T YOU MASTER HIFUMI?
EXCUSE ME.
BUT WHY DID THE PILLAR TAKE MY FORM? AND WHO THREW THE JUNK IN THE WELL...

THANK YOU FOR CARING FOR MY GRANDFATHER WHEN HE WAS ALIVE.
WHEN HE WAS ALIVE?
A relative of Uncle Genzo?
WE HELD A FUNERAL YESTERDAY. WE DID IT WITHOUT A BODY...
I'VE BEEN HERE SEVERAL TIMES TO TIDY UP HIS THINGS.
...THEY WERE GOING TO FILL THAT WELL IN, SO I THREW THE JUNK INTO IT. I FINISHED YESTERDAY.
...
HAVE I CAUSED A PROBLEM?
THIS IS THE LAST OF IT.
AH!
AHHH!
CRUMPLE
YOINK
...HERE'S GENZO...

I WAS SO DISRESPECTFUL ...
LOOK WHAT I'VE DONE.
I'LL TAKE THE BODY HOME FOR CREMATION...
THEN, MAY I ASK YOU...
YES.
CAN YOU BURN THESE THINGS ALONG WITH GENZO...?

THOSE MARKS ON THE KID'S CHEST WERE WHERE UNCLE GEN HAD MARKED THE PILLAR TO RECORD MY HEIGHT.
I GET IT!
SNAP
...I WAS AN ONLY CHILD.
AND THE PILLAR HAD A RECORD OF MY GROWTH ON IT.
SO IT STARTED TO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS HIFUMI AND THAT IT WAS ALIVE.
HIFUMI
SO IT IMAGINED THAT IT WAS JUST LIKE HIFUMI PLAYING WITH GENZO OUTSIDE.
AND THE JUNK BECAME ITS IMAGINARY FRIENDS.

TO THE PILLAR..
...UNCLE GEN WAS LIKE A FATHER GIVING HIM A NAME.
THE RESULT OF HIS DESPERATE LONGING...
...BUT AFTER GENZO DISAPPEARED THE DREAM BECAME A NIGHTMARE.
MEOW
THAT PILLAR WAS THE REASON WE WERE REUNITED.
HIS FEELINGS FOR UNCLE GEN WERE MUCH STRONGER THAN MINE...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
...I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE EATING SOMETHING SO LIKE HIFUMI.
DIDN'T YOU EAT THE NIGHT-MARE?
HE WAS IN THAT COLD WELL THE WHOLE TIME..!
BECAUSE I'M WITH A BAKU?
...BUT WHY DID IT HAPPEN WHEN I CAME TO THE SILVER STAR...
HIRUKO, ARE YOU ILL?
I guess I should thank him.

KAGOME, KAGOME...
BIRD IN A CAGE...
C'MON! YOU'LL NEVER BEAT ME!
YOINK
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WANTED TO MAKE YOUR MARK?
"Here's a good pillar!
I'M SO GLAD HIRUKO'S FOUND A FRIEND.
...I CAN SEE YOUR NOSE HAIRS!
ARGH!
I'LL MAKE YOU CRY WITH DEFEAT!
Shrimp!
I HOPE THAT BOY'S IN HEAVEN NOW WITH UNCLE GEN AND HIS FRIENDS.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR 2: END

御負

ONE DAY, MIZUKI WENT TO THE RIVER TO DO LAUNDRY AND HIFUMI WENT TO THE MOUNTAINS TO COLLECT FIREWOOD.
THE THIRTEENTH AND A HALF NIGHT: LUCKY CAT
I FEEL DIZZY...
URK
THE SUN SURE IS STRONG TODAY.
HIRUKO WAS LEFT ON HIS OWN IN THE SHOP.
UZZZ
THERE WON'T BE ANY CUSTOMERS UNTIL EVENING...
MAYBE I SHOULD GO LIE DOWN.
DING
HELLO.

PLONK
I saw that in the Tenth Night ...
KAIRI ASKED ME TO DELIVER THIS TO YOU!
IT'S SHIMA FROM DELIRIUM!
SWING
HUP
HEY, WAIT!
OK, BYE!
Done!
...OH! THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE.
HIRUKO HAD MANY QUESTIONS FOR SHIMA, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.
IT CAN'T BE!
I HAVEN'T SEEN KAIRI SINCE THIS MORNING. DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS?
DING

I KNEW IT.
HEE
LONG TIME NO SEE, HIRUKO.
HEE
HEE
HEE
...
I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE...
IT'S BECAUSE OF THAT WEIRD HAIR BAND. LET ME TAKE IT OFF!
Huh?
Huh?
IT DOESN'T SUIT YOU.
Oh!
YOU'RE WEARING A KIMONO.
GAH!
COME ON! JUST MUSCLE IT...
I won't let you!
WHY WON'T YOU LET ME TAKE IT OFF?
HEY! NO NEED TO GET VIOLENT.
...
What happened? It came off?
DADUM
DADUM
AH!
WHAT'S THAT?!

WELL, HIRUKO ...
SHOULD WE CHANGE THE TITLE OF THIS STORY? HOW ABOUT...
BALDY INSPECTOR.
SKWING!
I'M JUST KIDDING! NO OFFENSE, OK?
HA HA HA
I AM NOT BALD!
QUIT MAKING THINGS UP!
WHAM!
?!
EMPTY.
HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN THERE?!
WHERE...
...AM I?
WHERE IS THIS ...?
SWOOSH...
WHERE ON EARTH AM I...
A DAY-DREAM
...IS A VISIT TO A FANTASY WORLD.
IS THE HEAT PLAYING TRICKS ON HIRUKO'S MIND? OR HAS HE ENTERED THE REALM OF FANTASY..?

THE END

夢喰閒3

SUPER POPULAR! GREAT ROMANTIC HOWAH...

SHIN MASHIBA's friend C.shiroi.com

I made a mistake but I liked it so I kept it.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR
A pretty version!

Did everyone study the last lesson? This time it's about glycerin... but C.shiroi.com has something to say. So I'm going to hand things over to him. Actually, glycerin hasn't appeared yet, so I can't write about it anyway.

Taken from monthly *Stencil's* November issue.

Enix is really fun!

What do you think?

I wonder how she felt?

So, you're probably wondering what this is about. Well, last time Hiruko said that he "liked soda." But a Baku can only eat nightmares, so if he drinks soda he'll throw up. It doesn't stop him. He drinks it and then throws it up, a hundred times a day. It's so noisy and it's really annoying. Please do something. I can't sleep. At this rate, I'm going to have bad dreams.

He spat it out!

(Mr. C, Saitama Prefecture)

"I WANNA!"

Lyrics: Nightmare Inspector
Music: Nightmare Inspector

I eat dreams but SODA GOES IN
I eat dreams so SODA IS BAD

FIZZY I wanna drink! Want it under the sun, days under the trees
FIZZY I wanna drink! Want it in the treetop, little birds chirp

I eat dreams so Nightmare GOES IN
I eat dreams so SODA IS BAD

Only BAD DREAMS, that is sad. My FOOD.
So, I rebel.
I stand up. Stand up.
REVOLUTION of rage!! Create miracles!!
Under the light (HEY!) Under the sky (HEY!) Under the desk (HEY!) Cow's tongue (HEY!)
1-2-3-4-3-2-1 ZERO!

※

EATDREAM EATDREAM EATDREAM
EATDREAM EATDREAM EATDREAM
INSPECT INSPECT INSPECT
INSPECT INSPECT INSPECT

Formalin. His life. Soda is soul.
I keep growing. Keep growing.
Warm DREAM. I see it.
Someday, I'll grow FORMALIN SOUL.
It's not too far away. FOREVER LOVE ...

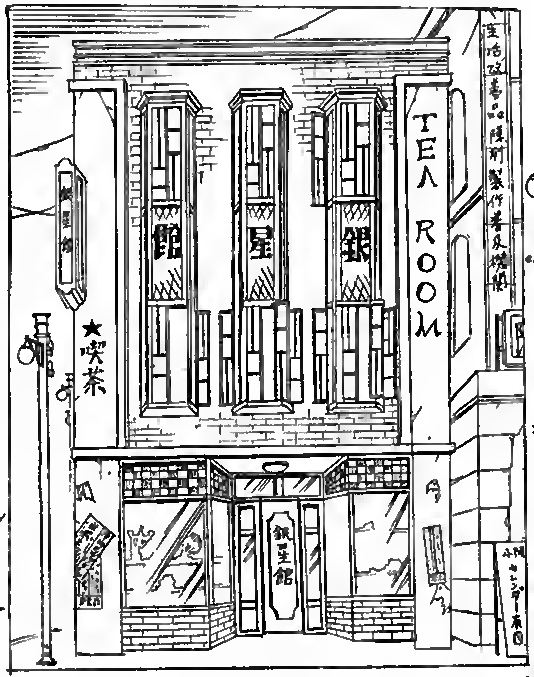
FIZZY I wanna drink! Beat the drum.
FIZZY I wanna drink! TITLE, I'll get you!

※(repeat chorus)

FIZZY Definitely I wanna drink. I wanna! (YEAH!)
Definitely FIZZY I wanna drink. Yay! (YES IT IS!)

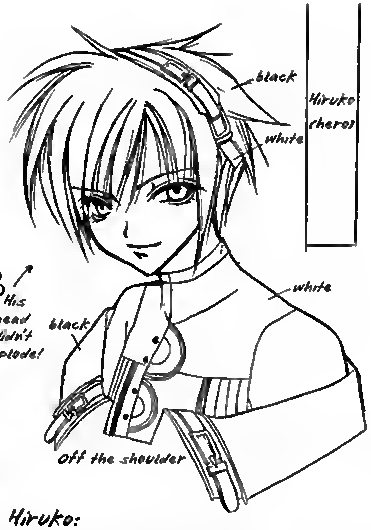
BLEEHH

I have these extra pages so I thought I'd show you the preliminary drawings before it get published! (They've changed quite a bit.)



Silver Star Tea House (exterior)

※ The second and third floors are apartments



His head didn't explode!

★ Hiruko:
He doesn't just eat nightmares— he enjoys them.

★ Past:
[redacted]
Future plot
SORRY!

Cane

★ Personality:
Very selfish. Strange attire that gets him mistaken for a foreigner.

★ Saying "The end"

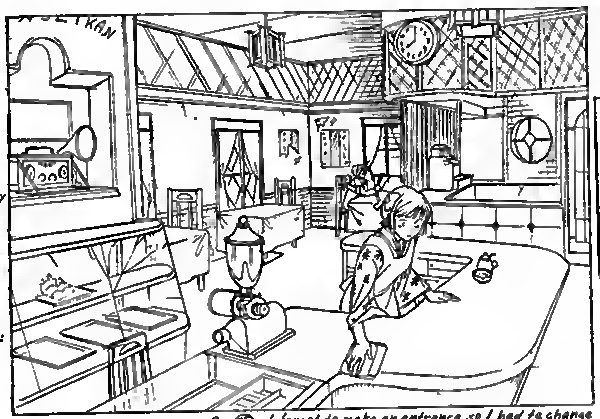
Got mixed. This isn't a play after all—

★ Cane:
[redacted] Puts people to sleep. Can also be used to fly and escape danger. The end compresses to absorb the dream.

This part hasn't really changed

★ Back Story:
[redacted]
SORRY!

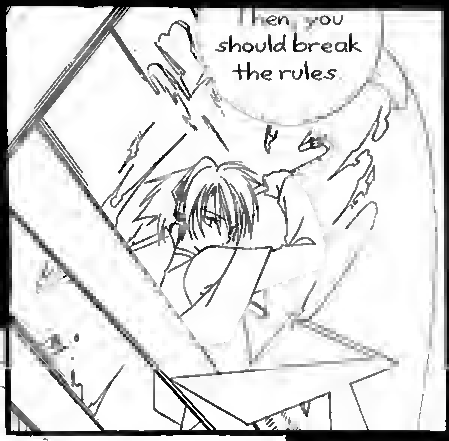
★ Silver Star Tea House (A Gathering Place):
The waitress is pretty sassy and loudmouthed. There are few customers.



Interior

I forgot to make an entrance so I had to change the drawing ~b

Hiruko spends all his free time there but doesn't order anything to eat. He's only interested in nightmares. The owner is also very easy to talk to.



Character Introduction.

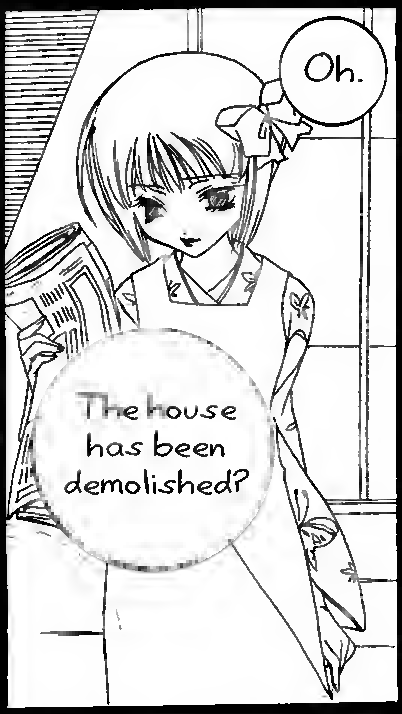
An early drawing that I didn't use in the end.

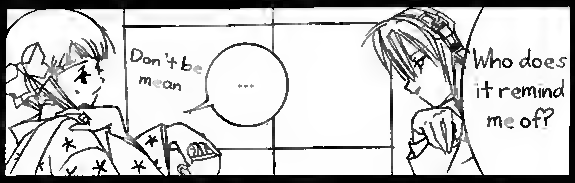
Hiruko.

Not much has changed from the original design except his hairstyle. I wanted his clothing to look exotic but it came out even stranger than I intended.

He's probably about 17.

He's the kind of person who would only eat mushrooms.





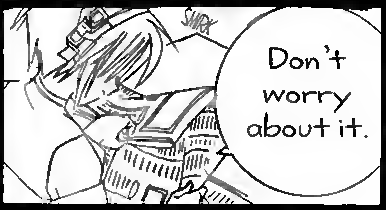
Mizuki

She changed quite a bit.

She was supposed to be more aggressive, but I redrew her and her personality changed.
(At first I had to redraw her three times.[b])

My friend Takecchi suggested the name Mizuki to me.

It means "moon blocked by mist." It's tricky to write but I like it. She's maybe a year younger than Hiruko. She's the kind of girl who would only eat the vegetables and tofu in sukiyaki. (Hifumi would only eat the meat.)



あとがき

Afterword

I'm Shin Mashiba;
this is my second book.
I thought this story
would be finished in
only five or six chapters
so I'm quite surprised...

Many thanks to my
editor who has helped
me a lot and to all the
readers who have
supported my work.

There are quite a few new
characters. I've most
enjoyed drawing Hifumi;
but he seems to have
taken away all the
tension, so I don't think
he'll appear too often.

お世話になった方々。

To everyone who has helped me.

★ 前担当 松下正尚様
現担当 佐伯有希様
My former editor
Masataka Matsushita
My current editor
Yuki Saeki

★ お手伝いしてくださった方
白井わんわん様
タケノ方様
とても頑張り屋の
アシ様方。
To those who helped me:
Wan wan Shirai
Takecchi
And my hard-working
assistants.

★ 情報
MOAI様
Information:
MOAI

★ エニックス様 関係者の方々
All the people at ENIX.

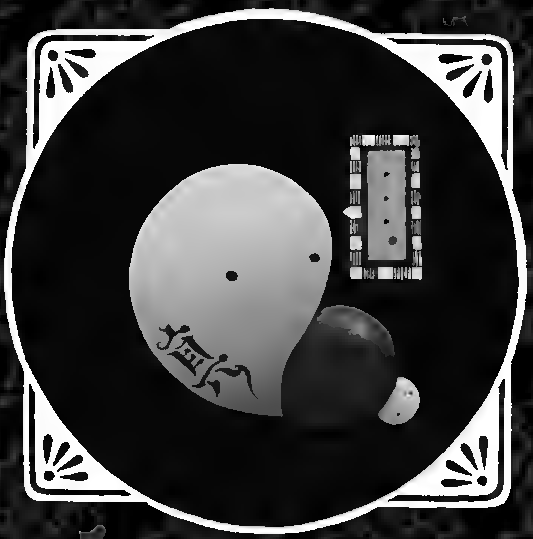
Thank you all so much!

A warm thank you to Wanwan Shirai, who drew three images for the bonus pages and came up with Naamu's name. And thanks for the guest manuscripts!

Torpedo...

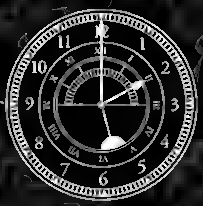
Mizuki...
Welcome. Come to talk about your nightmare? Here you are.
Oh, thank you
You promptly serve coffee to my customers...
But whenever I look at your welcoming smile, I can't help but wonder...
Why on earth...
...do you serve caffeine to people who've come here to sleep?
★銀星館

Dreams on the menu in this volume: an amnesiac with a misplaced sister, a voice actor who can no longer be heard, a wall that blocks true love, an author with a mystical case of writer's block, and a boy who literally masks his feelings.



SHIN MASHIBA

What kind of nightmares do you have? I still remember a nightmare I had when I was young in which I ate fifty live slugs. For some reason the taste was kind of familiar.



Shin Mashiba's first manga, *Yumekui Kenbun* (Nightmare Inspector), premiered in *Monthly Stencil*, a shojo magazine, in December 2001 and was then serialized in *Monthly G Fantasy* from 2003 to 2007. Mashiba-san's own nightmares include being chased by time.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR: YUMEKUI KENBUN ②

Shin Mashiba

Translation: Gemma Collinge

English Adaptation: Kristina Blachere
Touch-up Art & Lettering: James Gaubatz

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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